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# A GREAT SOUL IN CONFLICT

## A CRITICAL STUDY OF SHAKESPEARE'S MASTER-WORK

BY

SIMON A. BLACKMORE, S. J.

PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH LITERATURE IN CAMPION COLLEGE

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"Men at some time are masters of their fates:  
The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars.  
But in ourselves."

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## PREFACE

No treatise is required to show forth Shakespeare's greatness; it was never questioned. The estimate of his contemporaries is disclosed in the inscription on the monument which they erected in the church at Stratford-on-Avon shortly after his death. In that epitaph he is hailed as unsurpassed by the grand luminaries of antiquity; a Nestor in wisdom, a Socrates in genius, and a Virgil in literary art, he so excels all other contemporary writers that they seem his pages or menials:

With the ascendancy of Puritanism and its spirit of hostility to the stage, his literary fame began to suffer an eclipse, which continued to deepen down to the days of Dryden, who, the first of modern critics to appreciate his greatness, summarized it in the lofty eulogy: "Shakespeare was the man who of all modern and ancient poets had the largest and the most comprehensive soul." In the century following, when reigned the influence of Pope and Johnson, his excellence became gradually apparent to all English critics, and with Garrick his Plays once more took the stage; but the century after brought the great revival, and when Coleridge and Hazlitt appeared to expound him, then for the first time the clouds were rifted, and he shone forth a fixed star of the first magnitude with a splendor unequalled in our literary heavens.

As a dramatist he is recognized without a peer, and as a poet, but one or two have attained sufficient fame to reach with him the same Parnassian heights. His knowledge of human nature, depth of feeling, richness of fancy, abundance of humor, strength and felicity of expression, and soundness of judgment, are all elements in the greatness of his genius. His masterpieces, the tragedies, remain the never ceasing topic of inspiration; but commentaries, as experience shows,

oftentimes offer difficulties to Catholic readers who cannot fail to notice that they not infrequently misinterpret certain points, pass over others that need elucidation, ignore in common the Poet's Faith and its influence upon his works, and scarcely consider the religion and moral aspect of his dramas. Attracted by his fame, as by a magnet, even the Agnostic, the Pantheist, the Positivist, and the Materialist, have culled out a line here and there from his writings, and, by giving them artful interpretations, have fondly claimed him for their own.

Though it be mooted still whether Shakespeare adhered to the Faith of his fathers, or abandoned it to embrace the new State religion, there is no doubt of his Christian belief. But a man's religious principles influence his life, and views, and sentiments, and, therefore, they must surely be weighed, when estimating his character and interpreting his works. A man writes as he is, a Turk as a Turk, a Jew as a Jew, and a Christian as a Christian. He writes, not as an abstraction, but as a complex being of a living soul and body, and all that this implies: a mind swayed by truth or error, a will inclined to virtue or to vice, a heart pulsating in a body alive with human emotions, energies, conflicting passions, sympathies and antipathies, and subject to environments and to the social, religious, and political conditions of his times; and, therefore, though Shakespeare carefully avoided the obtrusion of his own personality upon his audience, he could not altogether frustrate the revelation of his mind and heart in his dramatic creations. Effects may be traced to their causes. As a statue is but the visible, concrete form of the sculptor's ideal creation, and reveals the original image or exemplar as existing in the mind of the artist with all its distinctive traits and qualities: so, in like manner, Shakespeare's characters, as they pass in view before us, are but the objective embodiments of his own subjective, or mental creations with all their distinctive hues and colors. Hence, Brutus personifies patriotism; Coriolanus, pride; Iago, villany; Hamlet, honor; Queen Katharine, patience; Cleopatra, sensuality; Edgar, justice; Henry V., true king-

ship; Edmund, treachery; and Goneril, ingratitude. Every character, either good or evil, discloses the Poet's own estimate of vice and virtue. His caricatures of parsons show his dislike of the new State religion, and his "reverent" portraits of monks and nuns in those days of Elizabethan persecution, reveal his deep-rooted love for the olden Faith. Shakespeare's characters then, as the creatures of his mind, must to a greater or less degree mirror the views and sentiments of their creative artist, and, as a consequence, be his own best interpreters.

The tragedy of *Macbeth* has ever been regarded with distinctive preference. Beyond Shakespeare's other plays it has won popular favor even among races other than the Anglo-Saxon. This popularity may be ascribed to its manifest resemblance to classic tragedy, to its unity of design and simplicity of development, to its pictorial charm, and to its mysterious elements of the preternatural. *Hamlet* may surpass other plays of Shakespeare in philosophic insight; *Othello* in careful portrayal of characters; *Lear* in the power of contending passions; and *Cymbeline* in the importance of the moral principles involved; but in the transparency of its plan, in the simple force of the harmonious, magnetic current of its action, and in its nervous power, bold sweep, and splendor of poetic diction, *Macbeth*, says Gervinus, remains uniquely pre-eminent. Its elements are combined with so little art, and yet to such a powerful effect as to give us a drama unequalled in the poetry of any age.<sup>1</sup> Some readers may prefer *Othello*, others *Lear*; but the majority, according to Hallam, agree that in *Macbeth* we possess a great epic drama and, in fact, affirms Sir Francis Drake, the grandest effort of Shakespeare's genius, the most sublime and impressive tragedy that the world has ever seen.

In the following study of the tragedy the author has devoted his attention mainly to aesthetic criticism, to the analysis of dramatic motives, to the clear exposition of the characters, and especially to the nature and action of the preternatural agents who in fiendish purpose have determined

1. Cf. Commentaries, p/ 583.

upon the moral ruin of Macbeth. In the process it seemed expedient to notice, not only the historic times in which the drama is cast, but also the social and religious conditions of the Poet's day, together with his views and sentiments, his friendships and antipathies, with the hope of catching here and there a glimpse of the great artist behind the mask of his characters. How far the work may seem successful is left to the judgment of the reader.

Though authorities, when quoted, are mentioned as far as possible, the writer wishes to acknowledge obligations to Shakespearean scholars who have brought together a fund of information open to the world, and in particular to Dr. H. Hudson, Mr. E. K. Chambers, Mr. R. G. Moulton, Mr. H. W. Mabie, and Dr. H. H. Furness. The text is based on that of the Globe Edition, and The Variorum Shakespeare.

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# INTRODUCTION

## CHAPTER I

### THE MACBETH OF HISTORY AND OF LEGEND

The Macbeth of history differs greatly from the warrior of fable and of legend. He first appears in trustworthy annals as the chieftain and hereditary high steward of Moray, who accompanied Malcolm II. on a journey to England to pay homage to King Cnut. His mother was Doda, daughter of the King; his father was not Sinel, the thane of Glamis, but Finley, the thane of Ross, who was killed about the year 1020 in an encounter with Malcolm II., the great grandfather of Duncan. Macbeth married the Princess Gruoch, the daughter of Boete. The latter had a joint claim to the throne; but Malcolm himself having no male issue, murdered him in 1032. Macbeth and Gruoch, therefore, had no good will toward the reigning branch of the family, for each had a father's murder to be avenged on the person of Duncan. When Malcolm died in 1034, his grandson, Duncan, the cousin of Macbeth, succeeded him, and at once named his eldest son, prince of Cumberland and heir to the throne.

Duncan, however, was not possessed of martial abilities, and his rule in those stormy times proved very ineffectual. After an unsuccessful invasion of England, he was obliged to enter upon a repressive war against Thorfinn, the Norwegian Jarl of Norway. But Macbeth, the commander of the Scottish forces, made common cause with Thorfinn, and his emissaries having murdered Duncan, he of his own right and of his wife's, assumed the crown. The one point upon which historians agree is that Macbeth's reign of seventeen years (1040-1057) was remarkable for unprecedented order and prosperity. Maintaining a vigorous government, he enforced the good and useful laws which he made, a thing wholly neglected by former kings. Hence, for his times, he

was a popular monarch, worthy and beneficent, whose bounty to the Church becoming known in Scotland and beyond her borders, won for him great renown. The title of "liberal king" was given him by St. Berchan. For these reasons and, moreover, because he neither renewed nor acknowledged the fealty which Malcolm had paid to England, the Scotch, who had long felt indignation at foreign mercenaries interfering in their domestic affairs, held him in high esteem, and men of great consequence considered it an honor to bear his name.<sup>1</sup>

Macbeth's most formidable enemy was his southern neighbor, the Earl of Northumberland. With the consent of Edward the Confessor, Siward invaded Scotland by land and sea, and in a great battle defeated Macbeth. Malcolm was at once proclaimed king, but the uncrowned monarch, retreating to the North, continued the war for four years until he fell at Lanfanan in Aberdeenshire. This Scottish king of the eleventh century, renowned for beneficence and patriotism, has, under the influence of medieval story-telling and willful falsification of historic facts for political purposes, been transformed into another Macbeth of myth and legend. With Scottish historians who followed the war of independence, says Hume Brown: "It was a prime concern to produce an unbroken line of Scottish kings stretching to the fathers of the human race. As an interloper of this series, they make Macbeth a monster whose origin and actions must alike have been contrary to nature."<sup>2</sup>

For the material of his tragedy, Shakespeare turns to his favorite book, *The Chronicles of England and Scotland*, by Raphael Holinshed, and from a medley of fable and tradition, which is called *The History of Macbeth*, he drew various elements and freely combined them without regard to historic facts.

Holinshed's authority is Hector Boyce of King's College, Aberdeen, and that of Boyce is John Fordun, a chantry priest of the same city. Fordun, of the fourteenth century,

1. Cf. The New-Hudson, Introduction.  
2. History of Scotland, Cambridge Series.

was the first "to gather floating legends, stories, facts, and fables concerning Scotland, and compact them into something like a chronological system," in a work known as *Chronica Gentis Scotorum*. Though Boyce follows Fordun, he freely adds new epic and dramatic elements, which clothe the legendary Macbeth with the more familiar form recognized in Holinshed and Shakespeare. In obtaining material for his plot, the Poet does not confine himself to the *History of Macbeth*, but freely borrows incidents from other parts of the *Chronicles*. Thus around the murder of Duncan he weaves certain facts which are historically connected with the murder of King Duffe, the great grandfather of Lady Macbeth, such as the portents, the tempest, and the drugging of the grooms. Duffe was murdered by Dunwald, the governor of the castle, and his wife. The drama, moreover, widely diverges from the historic Macbeth, not only in the portrayal of his character, but also in the rapidity of his downfall, and in his true connection with the Norwegians, who did not invade Scotland during Duncan's reign. Again, the rebellion of Dunwald is mere fiction, and concerning the fate of Lady Macbeth, fable, tradition, and history are all silent. Banquo and Fleance, whose names are not even Gaelic, seem fictitious characters. Though they were not the ancestors of the House of Stewart, and were unknown to early authorities, yet modern *Peerages and Genealogical Charts* still retain their names in the pedigree of the Royal Houses of England and Scotland.

As Shakespeare, however, designed *Macbeth* to be a tragedy and not an historic play, it mattered little whether his materials were based on fact or fiction. Hence, freely blending together conflicting facts and fables, he has fashioned a drama which may rank as his greatest work. As a psychological study of the effects of evil upon human life, it is pitched in the highest tragic key. "Its thoughts, kindled into speech and its purpose into action, crowd and jostle each other in such rapid succession that it has been deservedly described as a tempest set to music."<sup>1</sup>

1. Furness, Variorum Shakespeare.

## CHAPTER II

### DRAMATIC STRUCTURE

All art under whatever form is governed by fixed and universally recognized laws. The greater their observance, the greater the perfection of the work. These laws are more imperative in the drama than in story or romance. A novel is written for leisurely perusal, and whether it be simply a heaping together of many but heterogeneous parts, or contain a well laid plot, the reader may pause at will or even turn back to study its plan. But the drama labors under different conditions. Intended for uninterrupted action, it hurries the spectator from scene to scene, leaving him little time to dwell in imagination upon rapidly succeeding events. In consequence, the plot of the drama must be more transparent, and its links of unity more obvious. In ancient Greece, the cradle land of dramatic literature and art, the laws of the drama were inexorably observed. Her great masters never deviated from the triple unity of action, time, and place. According to the law of unity of action, they rigorously excluded every extraneous element, and, in developing a single action, clustered around it all the incidents, so as naturally to form one whole. Less essential were the other unities of time and place. They sprang from the conditions of the Greeian stage, which was never deserted during the whole play.

The law of unity of time ordained that the action be continuous, and embrace no event which could not be represented in a period of time equivalent to a single day. Unity of place required that the scene be laid in the same place, and continue unchanged throughout the play. Moreover, the master dramatists of Greece confined their tragedies to the grave, terrible, and pathetic, and excluded all that was

comic and too familiar. These characteristics distinguish the classic from the romantic tragedy, which, though they differ much, nevertheless agree in one important point: both are the realm of powerful passions which tend to purify by means of pity and of terror.

Under the influence of the Renaissance, the French dramatists became enamored of classic literature, and in their natural love for regularity, adopted and introduced into modern Europe the triple unity of Greek tragedy. In England, however, where the Renaissance was less influential, the romantic drama grew rapidly in popular favor. Though there were not wanting scholars like Sir Philip Sydney, who in an *Apology for Poetry* (1583) vigorously defended the classic against the new romantic school, against them was the rising genius of Shakespeare. Independently of Grecian models, of which perhaps he knew little, he was the greatest factor in the creation of the romantic tragedy, which differs from the classic as a wild and magnificent landscape from a beautiful and regularly plotted garden. "The ancient art of dramatic poetry rigorously separates things which are dissimilar. The romantic delights in indissoluble mixtures and contrarieties; nature and art, poetry and prose, seriousness and mirth, spirituality and sensuality, terrestrial and celestial, life and death, are by it blended together in the most intimate combination."<sup>1</sup>

If the Shakespearean drama found little favor in France, it was because her own great dramatists had formed the popular taste for classic tragedy. Hence, Voltaire, whose spirit too long dominated French criticism, failed to appreciate Shakespeare's plays. To him, they were wild and incoherent, and the violations of the classic unities made the Poet a barbarian in his eyes. Different was the verdict of the race across the Rhine. Their own great masters, lovers of the romantic drama, recognized the genius of Shakespeare; in fact, as they claim, rediscovered him, brought him forth from the obscurity which began with the Puritan eclipse, and made his plays popular among other nations. Where Voltaire

1. Schlegel, *Dramatic Literature*, p. 342.

saw nothing but wildness and incoherency, Heine saw the sublimest unity. "The world," he says, "forms the stage of Shakespeare's plays, and that is his unity of place; eternity is the period in which his plays come to pass, and that is his unity of time; and the hero of his plays, the bright essential figure, representing the unity of action and conformable to the other two is—Mankind, a hero who is always dying and always rising again, always loving, yet in whom love is stronger than hate."

With the passing of Voltaire's influence came an awakening of the French to the genius of Shakespeare. Of all his plays, *Macbeth* has won the greatest popularity in France. "No other," affirms Darmesteter, "has supplied our everyday literature with more lifelike characters or more hackneyed phrases."

"Macbeth, Lady Macbeth, Banquo, are for us in France quite as real as any characters of our own national theater; their meaning is as clear and striking, and the banquet of Macbeth, the ghost of Banquo, the 'damned spot' of Lady Macbeth, are become familiar in everyday speech. This especial popularity of *Macbeth* is due to its rigorous unity, startling clearness, and to its enthralling logic; in this last respect it is the most purely classic of Shakespeare's plays."

Though deviating from the laws that restricted ancient tragedy, it must be noted that Shakespeare was far from blind to the problems of the classic unities. Neither the difficulties which they involve nor a desire to be unhampered by them induced him to prefer the romantic drama. The unities offered him no difficulties, as he proves in two successive dramas, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*. In the former, he deliberately and wildly violates all the unities, while in the latter, he most scrupulously adheres to them, a fact which discloses his ability, as well as his deliberate choice to accept or to reject at will the formalities of classicism. As a consequence, while his grasp of human nature is universally admitted, he is often charged with being irregular in his art as a whole, and in particular of being careless in the

construction of his plots. To some this opinion seems superficial.

Far from being a despiser of law, he has elevated the whole conception of plot from that of mere unity of action, obtained by the reduction of the amount of matter presented, to that of a harmony of design, binding together concurrent actions from which no degree of complexity was excluded.<sup>1</sup> In ancient tragedy, it is true, single action constituted the whole idea of plot, but in Shakespeare the dramatic action is of a much more elaborate order, and commonly consists of complex elements, reduced to an agreeable unity. The ancient differs from the modern tragedy as melody from symphony. If simplicity of plot made ancient tragedy a solemn melody, complexity of plot makes Shakespeare's a grand symphony, in which the main action is the master melody with which other inferior yet distinct actions blend in perfect harmony. "Happenings within the space of seventeen years are compressed into the narrow limits of the drama, in which are represented three successive stages in the life of Macbeth—his crime, his prosperity, and his punishment. What the Greek masters would have developed in a trilogy, as in Orestes, for example, to which *Macbeth* has been more than once compared, is here confined to a single drama."<sup>2</sup>

Though complex in character, *Macbeth* has, nevertheless, peculiar unity of structure. Its absolute regularity of movement, its counter-balanced parts, and freedom from complicating underplots, indicate that the Poet has by sympathy of genius approached therein, more than in any other of his dramas, to the simplicity and bold sweep of the ancient classics. Clearly the motive of the tragedy was too serious to allow of trifling or delay by digressions or counterplots, and hence every episode, however slight, even though introduced for the purpose of relief or of contrast, bears a real relation to the prime character. The whole action of the drama, concentrated in the rise and fall of the protagonist, sweeps along with amazing rapidity. His fortunes, flowing

1. Cf. Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist, R. G. Moulton, C. XX.

2. A. Mezieres, apud Furness.

on unimpeded, reach the summit of success at the middle of the play, and thence as quickly ebb downward to the close or catastrophe. Its surprising unity results from the development of a single character. Macbeth fills the play; for, present or absent, he never ceases to occupy our attention. Nothing happens that does not bear upon his destiny; when the Scotch nobles discuss the unfortunate condition of their country, Macbeth is the subject of their discourse. When the assassins present themselves at the castle of Macduff, it is Macbeth who has sent them. When the witches assemble on the heath, it is for the ruin of Macbeth. When Hecate appears among them to hasten their work of crime, it is to lure Macbeth to destruction. He binds in one all portions of the drama; for every circumstance contributes toward the *denouement*, and we can not fail to admire the powerful art with which Shakespeare has maintained unity amid the numberless catastrophes of the play.<sup>1</sup>

Remarkable, moreover, are the parallelisms found in three incidents that lead to his triumph, and in the three that drive him on to ruin. Each Act again has a specific purpose; the First, the temptation; the Second, the murder of Duncan; the Third, the murder of Banquo; the Fourth, of Macduff's family; and the Fifth, the catastrophe in which each crime meets a merited retribution. There is, furthermore, a unity of thought that dominates the whole drama, a central idea which, embodied outwardly in the workings of an unholy ambition and in its fatal consequences, is illustrated in the rise and fall of Lord and Lady Macbeth. In them is exposed the all important truth that every mortal is subject to temptation, and must carve out his own destiny for good or for evil, according as he dominates or is dominated by his ruling passion. A theme so universal in its application is indeed worthy of Shakespeare's grandest tragedy.

1. Ibidem.

## CHAPTER III

### THE PRETERNATURAL ELEMENT

Preternatural agencies are an essential element of the tragedy of *Macbeth*. Visibly embodied in the Weird Sisters, they control the tragedy from first to last. If the preternatural has always exercised a peculiar power over the human mind, it is because man's natural desire to know the future prompts him to attempts in every age to lift the veil of futurity. Owing to this impulse, often heightened by a desire of personal gain or advantage, superstitious practices, even though inhibited by divine command, have been widely diffused among all peoples, and have persisted through all times. Superstition, like idolatry itself, is but the outward expression of some religious truth, which, inherent in our nature, is coextensive with human kind. Wandering away from the cradle lands of the human race, tribe after tribe lost in time the knowledge of the true God and His worship, and fashioned new but idolatrous religions in which Satan, substituting himself for the Creator, received, under varied forms of idols and oracles and superstitious practices, the supreme homage due alone to Almighty God. This fact Milton commemorates in verse :

“By falsities and lies the greater part  
Of mankind they corrupted to forsake  
God their Creator . . .  
And devils to adore for deities.  
Then were they known to men by various names,  
And various idols through the heathen world.  
The chief were those who from the pit of Hell  
Roaming to seek their prey on Earth, durst fix  
Their seats long after, next the seat of God,  
Their altars by His altars, gods adored  
Among the nations round.” (*Par. Lost. Bk. 1.*)

The worship of false gods was nothing more than the service of the devils. Satan and his fallen angels were the animating spirit of idolatrous religions, and dwelt in their idols, and oftentimes spoke through them. Hence the royal Psalmist affirms, "The gods of the gentiles are devils";<sup>1</sup> and again, St. Paul, "The things which the heathen sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils and not to God."<sup>2</sup> Idolatry begot superstitious practices, which grew with its growth, and flourishing through the heathen world, attained most multiplied forms when ancient Greece and Rome had reached the summit of their culture. Divination, sorcery, magic, necromancy, and witchcraft, were all ready instruments by which evil spirits intruded themselves into the affairs of human life.

But superstition found in Christianity an implacable foe. With the expansion of the Church all forms of diableries were banished from the light of day, and no longer could they ply their noxious trade, save in secret hiding places. Superstition was awakened to new life during the Middle Ages, when the wild hordes of the North in repeated incursions poured down upon Europe, bringing with them their tribal gods and their sorceries; and again when, centuries later, the spirit of the Renaissance engendered by means of pagan literature and art a widespread recrudescence of pernicious practices. These were much resorted to in Germany and in England in the days of Shakespeare. Belief in evil spirits and in the power of witches to do harm by their aid, was common to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Witchcraft had become so prevalent in England during the reign of Elizabeth that in 1562 a statute was enacted which made it a crime of the greatest magnitude. James I., himself a firm believer in the black art, issued in 1599 his famous work on *Demonology*, as a counterblast to the skeptical book of Reginald Scott; and, on ascending the English throne, enacted a penal law which minutely defined the practice of witchcraft: "Any one that shall use, practice or exercise any invocation of any evil or

1. Ps. 95:5.

2. 1 Cor. 10, 20.

wicked spirit, or consult or covenant with, entertain or employ any evil or wicked spirit to or for any purpose, or take up any dead man, etc.—such offender duly and lawfully convicted shall suffer death.”<sup>1</sup> After this enactment, the witch mania became epidemic in every part of England, and crossing the sea caused great disturbance, notably in Boston and Salem, Massachusetts, where twenty persons were executed for the supposed crime of witchcraft.<sup>2</sup>

A most powerful agent in the reaction against the mania was the Jesuit, Frederick Von Spee, a professor at the University of Paderborn. His work, *Cautio Criminalis*, printed in 1631, won for him a worldwide reputation. It is an arraignment of trial for witchcraft, based on his own experience, and describes in thrilling language and with cutting sarcasm the horrible abuses of judicial proceedings, and particularly the inhuman use of the rack.<sup>3</sup>

The later part of the nineteenth century witnessed, especially in England and America, a strange revival of necromancy or spiritism, which claims today far more adherents than is commonly supposed. As, on the testimony of Josephus, sorcery flourished most in Israel during periods of religious decay, so in modern times, it appears that Satan, whose activity was curbed by the light and influence of the gospel of Christ, is reasserting his power and regaining his ascendancy in proportion as men, abandoning the one and supernatural religion, practically revert to irreligion, to heathenism, and infidelity. Hence, in communities where the Christian revealed religion is weakest, there superstition is often found to thrive the most. The spirit of irreligion as

1. King James prided himself upon his knowledge of demonology. “He demonstrated,” says Lingard (Vol. VII, p. 281), “the existence of witches and the mischiefs of witchcraft against the objections of Scott and Wierus; he even discovered a satisfactory solution for that obscure but interesting question, ‘Why the devil did work more with ancient woman than others.’ Witchcraft at his solicitation was made a capital offense and from the commencement of his reign there scarcely passed a year in which some aged female or other was not condemned to expiate on the gallows her supposed communication with the evil spirit.”

2. The era of the Long Parliament was that, perhaps, which numbered the most executions. Three thousand persons are said to have perished during the continuance of the sittings of that body, by legal executions independently of summary deaths at the hands of the mob. The last execution for supposed witchcraft occurred as late as 1716. Cf. *International Encyclopedia*, Vol. 15.

3. *Cath. Encyclopedia*, Vol. XV.

dominated by Materialism, has exercised an evil influence upon the modern stage, as is seen in the travestied presentment of the Weird Sisters. They have now become nothing more than common witches who are altogether different from their preternatural reality in Shakespeare's day. Hence, says Hazlitt:<sup>1</sup> "We can conceive a common actor to play Richard III. tolerably well. We can conceive no one to play Macbeth properly, or to look like a man who has encountered the Weird Sisters. All the actors that we have ever seen appear as if they had encountered them on the boards of Drury Lane or Covent Garden, but not on the heath of Forres, and as if they did not believe what they had seen. The Weird Sisters are ridiculous on the modern stage and we doubt if the Furies of Aeschylus would be more respected."

1. Characters of Shakespeare, p. 23.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE WEIRD SISTERS

Shakespeare's belief in witches was that common to his times. To the popular mind, witches were but the wicked and willing instruments of evil spirits that sought to inflict injury on mankind. By tradition they were unchristian old hags, whose ugliness no less than their malevolence inspired disgust rather than awe and terror. If they inflicted temporal injury on the victims of their envy and hate, they were powerless to lead them involuntarily to spiritual ruin. According to popular belief, they entered into a compact with Satan, who appearing in some visible form, promised the witch what she most desired on the condition that she abjure Christianity and swear fealty to himself. The powers of witches as well as their rites and incantations were substantially the same in Christian as in pagan times.

The reality of witchcraft is a question on which it is not easy to pronounce a confident judgment. In the face of Holy Scripture and the teaching of the Fathers and theologians the abstract possibility of a pact with the Devil and of a diabolical interference in human affairs can hardly be denied; but no one can read the literature of the subject without being convinced that in ninety-nine cases out of one hundred the allegations rest upon nothing better than pure delusion. The most bewildering circumstance is the fact that in a large number of witch prosecutions the confessions of the victims, often involving all kinds of Satanistic horrors, have been made spontaneously and apparently without threat or fear of torture. Also the full admission of guilt seems constantly to have been confirmed on the scaffold when the poor sufferer had nothing to gain or lose by the confession. One can only record the fact as a psychological problem, and point out that

the same tendency seems to manifest itself in other similar cases.<sup>1</sup>

Aware of the popular belief in witchcraft, the Poet deemed it unnecessary to elaborate Macbeth's relation to Satan, or to picture an open compact between him and the powers of evil; all this was clear to the minds of his audience. Building upon this popular belief, the Poet gives us in the Weird Sisters, not the witches of common superstition, but a new creation unique and altogether his own. "They are," says Coleridge, "as true a creation of Shakespeare as his Ariel and Caliban, and while wholly differing from witches of other writers, yet present a sufficient external resemblance to the creatures of vulgar superstition to act immediately on the audience." The Greek Hecate and her sister witches of Middleton, as well as of other contemporary dramatists, are, says Charles Lamb, "The plain traditional old women witches of our ancestors—poor, deformed, and ignorant, the terror of villages—themselves amenable to a justice; but he indeed should be a hardy sheriff who with all the power of the county at his back should attempt to lay hands on the Weird Sisters: They are beyond human jurisdiction." If in them the Poet designed to give a visible expression to a moral significance in the workings of human guilt, which, beginning with the fall in Eden, has continued under varied modes through all the ages, he was obliged to clothe these tempting evil spirits in some visible form like the Weird Sisters, who, bearing some resemblance to the traditional witch, would merit credibility and rouse the attention of his audience. Hence, while assigning them the feminine garb of the common witch, he yet differentiates their nature by making them heavily bearded women, by giving them the new and distinctive name of "Weird Sisters," and by endowing them in person, like the Norse Norns, with unusual preternatural powers and superhuman knowledge. To preserve their truthful reality, he scrupulously insists on picturing them in disguise as positive, objective existences. This was the more necessary, since, dominating the whole action of the drama, they lead

1. Cf. Herbert Thurston, S. J., apud The Catholic Encyclopedia.

Macbeth on through doubts and conflicts to his final ruin; and, as a consequence, to appreciate the tragedy, the reader must consider them as beings, as real as Macbeth and Banquo. By gliding forth amid lightning flashes like ghosts from a thunder cloud, the Weird Sisters indicate, at their very first appearance, their diabolical nature and kinship to the dark and tempestuous elements of nature. Two persons behold them at the same time; both address them, and are in turn addressed by them in prophetic terms. If in our Materialistic age a few critics affect to view them as mere fantastic creations of Macbeth's overheated mind, and without any objective reality, such a notion is amply refuted by the drama itself, as well as by the historic fact that, on Shakespeare's own stage, the Weird Sisters appeared and visibly enacted their role with no less objective reality than did the other characters of the play.

As real witchcraft is the work of Satan, so are its religion and its liturgy. "We cannot quite dispense in this life," says Professor Dowden, "with ritualism, and the ritualism of evil is foul and ugly." A liturgy is nothing more than an outward and visible expression of inward religious faith and worship, and religion of some kind is shown by the experience of ages to be essential to social life, and if essential to social life on Earth, it is no less so to the society of Hell. Lucifer, who would not serve in Heaven, rules in Hell as Satan or adversary of God, where he receives the gruesome homage of ruined legions. In dealing with his willing tools on Earth, he must perforce adopt means in harmony with his mysterious and preternatural character, and employ, moreover, a ritual, a liturgy by which he may give human expression to his diabolical religion, and such expression must be especially accommodated to the senses and minds of men. Hence, when dealing with Macbeth, evil spirits in the form of the weird use the language and ritual of witchcraft as best suited to their purpose and best understood by him. Making a brew of infernal charms, they reveal their ecstasy over intended crimes, sing in hellish glee, and to mystic rhythms dance around their fiendish chaldron, disclosing in

their abhorrent rites the passionless malignity of their diabolical natures. Darkness is their light, storms their sunshine; tumults, terrors, murders, insanity, suicides, and Satanic liturgies their sole religion.

## CHAPTER V

### THE REAL NATURE OF THE WEIRD SISTERS

Accounts of preternatural occurrences, it is evident, must be received with caution. Aristotle's dictum, virtue is the golden mean, is serviceable in guarding against credulity as well as incredulity. Both, equally odious, are blemishes of the human mind. Truth is attainable only by avoiding the one and the other. There is always danger of illusion, since the populace whose credulity is proverbial, is naturally inclined to attribute to occult or preternatural forces any wondrous effect the cause of which is non-apparent. No less common is the danger of deceit; though charlatans have been repeatedly exposed, they continue to ply their trade with astonishing success; though fraudulent spiritists and their sham *seances* have been unmasked time and again, they still attract the many who are overmastered by the desire to meddle with the preternatural. The frauds prevalent in every age have induced the Church wisely to caution her ministers against deceptions. In her ritual of exorcism, she teaches that extraordinary effects, which are commonly ascribed to the preternatural, are not readily to be admitted; that there is always danger lest the superstition of the masses and their credulity may enable impostors to parade in the garb of truth; that natural distempers, certain kinds of madness, uncommon palsies, and epilepsies, are not to be construed as effects of enchantments or possessions, nor to be attributed to causes beyond the natural upon vulgar prejudices and notions of the manner in which such things are done. She insists that her ministers meet every apparently preternatural effect with a critical mind, that they judiciously examine into them, and suspend judgment, save in the presence of the most convincing evidence.

In the quest of truth concerning the preternatural, incredulity is no less an impediment than its opposite extreme. A counterfeit is a convincing proof of the worth of the original, and to deny the latter in order to guard against its imitation, is an act of folly proper to the skeptic. In our modern irreligious world it has become the fashion to view the preternatural no less than the supernatural with hostile gaze and to ridicule it as a chimera. Materialists of every hue, and their name is legion, dogmatize against all that is above the natural, and in this they are consistent with their principles. Denying *a priori* the reality of everything that is beyond our sense perceptions, they are perforce obliged to deny the existence of all incorporeal beings, such as God, the immateriality of the human soul, and angels good and bad of the spirit world. The illogical position of the Materialistic school is well exposed by an English scientist who says: "No one has seen the ether of space. It does not appeal to sense, and we know of no way of getting hold of it. Further, it is a thing of incredibly opposed characteristics, an anomaly hardly to be understood, and with some difficulty to be even credited with existence. Yet concerning this material ether, which no one can see or understand, Materialists make an absolute Act of Faith"; while the truth of God's existence, the evidence for which is much stronger than for that of ether, they flatly deny.<sup>1</sup> That their *a priori* dogmatism is based on nothing more than mere assumptions is clear to every man who perceives himself to be endowed, not only with sense perception, but also with a rational soul, which enables him to rise by his intellectual faculty above corporeal things of sense, and, unfettered by time and space, to revel in the contemplation of sublime and spiritual truths, which are wholly beyond sense perception. Moreover, to deny all accounts of the preternatural, the Materialist must close his eyes to well authenticated facts of the ancient and modern world.

In our own times exists a Society for Psychical Re-

1. Cf. The Scientific Outlook by Sir Oliver Lodge in the "Catholic Mind," Dec. 22, 1913.

search,<sup>1</sup> whose object is the scientific investigation of all those psychical manifestations which have either been ignored or doubted by natural science and by experimental psychology. Its members, men of science and of all religious shades of belief, both Christian and non-Christian, are well known to the learned world of England and America. Confining their researches solely to remarkable authentic cases, they employed the most modern scientific and psychological methods of investigation, with the result that many of the phenomena proved to be truly preternatural,<sup>2</sup> and that the claims of some spiritists were so undoubtedly approved that many *researchers*, hitherto skeptical, were led to profess a belief in spiritism. The effects produced could not be explained on purely natural grounds; they were disproportioned or foreign to the means employed, and necessarily required the action of some intellectual though invisible agent. Such deeds, however, as every Christian knows, cannot be regarded as the work of God or His angels; and, therefore, must be ascribed to evil spirits, who are ever anxious to meddle in human affairs, in order to deceive and seduce man from God.<sup>3</sup> This invisible presence of evil agents in our moral world is admitted by many non-Catholic Shakespearean critics. In reference to the nature of the Weird Sisters, Professor Dowden says that the history of the race and the social medium in which we live and breathe have created forces of good and evil, which are independent of the will of each individual man and woman. No great realist in art has hesitated to admit the existence of a dual force which is known to theologians as

1. In 1898, the membership of the English Society under Sir William Crookes numbered 900, and its American branch, 450.

2. "Researches in the Phenomena of Spiritism," by Sir William Crookes.

3. The *Society for Psychical Research* has scientifically verified eleven physical phenomena of Spiritism. That of *Phantom Forms and Faces* is very pertinent. Sir William Crookes and his associates witnessed the materialization of human forms and faces which appeared in such a manner as to become objectively and simultaneously visible to all persons assisting at the experiment. Human forms became visible and gradually developed in solidity and clearness. Sometimes the entire form, enveloped in what seemed a kind of light drapery, moved about the room, spoke in audible whispers, and after a time melted away again before their eyes. When the conditions were favorable, they sometimes have all the characteristics of real human beings with all the functions of a human body in full working order. (*Phenomena of Spiritism*, by Sir William Crookes; also *Modern Spiritism*, by J. G. Raupert, c. II.)

divine grace and Satanic temptation. The idealist may dream of divorcing himself from the large impersonal life of the world, and of erecting himself into an independent will, but in reality there is no such thing as "naked manhood." Between the evil within and the evil without, subsist a terrible sympathy and reciprocity; and the constitution which is morally enfeebled supplies appropriate nutriment for the germs of disease. It is enough to know that such powers, auxiliary to vice, do exist outside ourselves, and that Shakespeare was scientifically correct in his statement of the fact.<sup>1</sup> "The undeniable though dark and mysterious connection between this life and the next," says Professor Ulrici, "constrains us to ascribe to the spiritual world a certain influence on the spirits yet embodied on this earth. In this truth lies the profound meaning of the Christian doctrine of devils and evil spirits," who, all intent on man's moral ruin, boast with the arch-fiend:

"To do aught good, never will be our task,  
But ever to do ill, our sole delight,  
As being the contrary to His high will  
Whom we resist." (*Parad. Lost*, Bk. 1.)

To ignore this truth is to miss the key to the tragedy of *Macbeth*. The idea of a spiritual realm of demons who, full of malignity, exercise their dark secret powers to gain human souls to the cause of evil, and do gain them, except so far as they are opposed, has been a definite conception, recognized through all times and in all stages of civilization. As a definite conception, it is found embodied in a Dr. Faust in the legendary lore of every race. Shakespeare himself was penetrated with the idea. For its truth he saw many proofs in Sacred Scripture. Hence, recognizing the existence of evil spirits that with Satanic cunning lie in wait for human souls, his Christian mind clothed them with visible forms in the new creation of the Weird Sisters. As he makes evil spirits prime agents in the drama, it was expedient to reveal their invisible presence and secret action to his audience by

1. Shakespeare, *His Mind and Art*, p. 220.

portraying them under some corporeal and visible form. He was familiar with Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, which speaks of the three fatal sisters who dwell in the deep abyss. They were goddesses of the infernal regions, and in the pagan notion of human destiny led doomed men into the way of calamity. Shakespeare, however, preferred to picture the tempters of Macbeth in some visible guise which would be more intelligible to his audience. Hence, the evil spirits that cross the chieftain's path on the blasted heath at Forres, he clothes with objective forms as witnessed in the Weird Sisters. They must, therefore, be clearly distinguished from the traditional witches of the play, which Middleton later introduced for spectacular effect. For such witches Macbeth has but contemptuous words, "You black and midnight hags!" But the "three fatal sisters," the "Vestal Virgins of hell," are horrid anomalies that surprise and mystify himself and Banquo.

Shakespeare's belief in demons and diableries was common to Protestants as well as to Catholics of his day. It was in conformity with the doctrine taught in Apostolic times, and was retained by the various Christian sects of the Reformation, even after they had been severed from the Catholic Church. But being still in the formative period, their new basic principle of religion was not yet developed to its logical conclusion, as it is today, when many reject the mystery of the incarnation, the divine inspiration of Sacred Scripture, eternal punishment, and the existence of a personal devil. Such negations would indeed have seemed blasphemous to Elizabethan ears, and in those less tolerant times would have merited for their advocates death at the stake. In Shakespeare's day, however, the new State religion<sup>1</sup> adhered to the Catholic doctrine common to Christendom, that Satan and his fallen legions were very real, both in existence and in malicious activity against man and God.

At the birth of Christianity, witchcraft and kindred diableries took on a new and distinct meaning, which was

1. Its proper or legal title is, "The Protestant Episcopal Church as Established by Law of Parliament."

unacceptable and often unintelligible to peoples who, amid the darkness of paganism, had for ages looked upon the state and their religion of idolatry and soceries as one and inseparable. In its very origin, Christianity was in its life and doctrines hostile to the principles of evil which dominated the heathen world; its mission was to enlighten men's minds by divine truths, and to redeem them from the slavery in which Satan had so long held them captive. By Apostolic as well as by Scriptural teaching, Satan is a wicked spirit of great intelligence and power, who, impotent in hatred and rage against the Almighty, turns his efforts in malice and in envy against man, the image of God, and by drawing him to perdition seeks to lessen the extrinsic glory of the Creator. Hence, in prosecution of their purpose the arch-fiend and his subordinate demons, strive to set up a dominion in rivalry with that of the Almighty. In consequence, they battle under varied forms against the kingdom of God on Earth, that spiritual organization known as the Catholic Church, and their malevolent power, heightened through human agencies, too often finds expression in persecutions that are waged by their blind dupes, whom they inspire with a hatred as irrational as their own is diabolical against the Church.

That their existence is a revealed truth was accepted by Shakespeare as it is by every Christian mind. To doubt it, is to question the fundamental truth of Christianity, that the Son of God became incarnate to redeem a fallen race from sin and to destroy Satan's evil works. Apart from the constant and universal belief in evil spirits, their existence is most frequently and emphatically inculcated in Holy Writ. God did not spare the angels that sinned.<sup>1</sup> The devils also believe and tremble.<sup>2</sup> By envy of the devil, death came into the world.<sup>3</sup> He that committeth sin is of the devil, for the devil sinneth from the beginning.<sup>4</sup> After withdrawing man from allegiance to the Creator,<sup>5</sup> the arch-fiend made himself the prince of this world,<sup>6</sup> and with his associate demons was

1. 2 Pet. 11:4.

2. Jas. 11:19.

3. Wisdom, 2, 24.

4. John, 1 Epis. 3:8.

5. Gen. 3.

6. John 12:31.

worshipped as gods among the gentile nations.<sup>1</sup> To the early Christian converts the Apostle writes: "Put you on the armor of God that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil; for our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against Principalities and Powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places."<sup>2</sup> To the Corinthians he writes: "I fear lest as the serpent seduced Eve by his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted and fall from the simplicity that is in Christ. For such false prophets are deceitful workmen, transforming themselves into the Apostles of Christ, and no wonder: for Satan himself transformeth himself into an angel of light."<sup>3</sup> To the same purpose are Shakespeare's lines:

. . . "the devil hath power .  
To assume a pleasing shape."<sup>4</sup>  
"The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose!"<sup>5</sup>  
"When devils will their blackest sins put on,  
They do suggest at first with heavenly shows."<sup>6</sup>

Sacred Scripture is, moreover, replete with Satan's activities among men. An evil spirit said: "I will go forth and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all the prophets of Achab."<sup>7</sup> A demon strangled the successive husbands of Sara.<sup>8</sup> Elias by command of God pronounced the sentence of death upon King Ochozias, because having fallen sick he sent messengers to consult Beelzebub, the god of Acheron.<sup>9</sup> After the spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul, he was vexed by an evil spirit, and his last act was like the first, but more significant. He began by consulting Samuel as a diviner, and he ends by consulting a professed sorceress. By the magic rites of the Witch of Endor he hoped to foresee the issue of the approaching battle. God meets him even in the cave of Satanic delusions, but as an antagonist. The reprobate king receives

1. Ps. 95 :5.  
2. Ephes. 6 :11, 12.  
3. 2 Cor. 11 :3, 13, 14.  
4. Hamlet, II. ii.  
5. Merch. of Ven., I, iii.

6. Oth., I, iii.  
7. 3 Kings, 22 :22.  
8. Tob. 8 :3.  
9. 4 Kings, 16.

by the mouth of the dead Samuel the news that on the morrow he and his sons shall be slain by the Philistines.<sup>1</sup>

It is, moreover, an undeniable fact that in heathendom many wonders were worked by means of the black art. As the magicians of Pharaoh were enabled by evil spirits to counterfeit some of the miracles of Moses,<sup>2</sup> so in the early days of the Church, Satan, by the wonders and illusions of Simon the Magician, attempted to frustrate the force of the true miracles of the Apostles.<sup>3</sup> Though sorcery and other forms of diableries flourished among idolatrous peoples, they found no foothold in Israël, where by divine command they were proscribed under the sanction of the direst penalties. "Beware lest thou have a mind to imitate the abominations of those nations; neither let there be found among you any who consulteth soothsayers, or observeth dreams and omens, neither let there be any wizard, nor charmer, nor any that consulteth pythonic spirits, or fortune-tellers, or that seeketh the truth from the dead, for the Lord abhorreth all these abominations."<sup>4</sup> This divine law was recognized and enforced from the beginning by the Church of Christendom, and her Scriptural doctrines concerning evil spirits and their wicked designs upon mankind, were accepted by Shakespeare as well as by the populace of England in his day. Hence, his audience readily comprehended the true nature of the Weird Sisters and their diabolical purpose to lure Macbeth to his temporal and eternal ruin.

1. 1 Samuel 28:19; and Cardinal Newman, *Character Sketches*—Saul.

2. Exod. 7:11.

3. Acts 8:10.

4. Deut. 18:9.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE PROPHECIES OF THE WEIRD SISTERS

The Poet portrays the Weird Sisters as real preternatural creatures, prescient of the future. Their predictions are accurately fulfilled even in the smallest particular. There is, however, naught surprising in this, for transcending mortals in perfection of nature and of intellect, they can perceive many things that are obscure or unknown to us. Their greater intelligence is due to the greater excellence of their spiritual nature, and this excellence is proportioned to their nearer approach to the Deity.

The more, says the Angelic Doctor, one approaches to the Creator, the more he partakes of the divine perfections; hence, because man as a rational creature is the lowest in the scale of intellectual creation, he reflects in his human soul but obscurely the image of His Maker, while the angelic nature, being immaterial and purely spiritual both in nature and activities, presents a more luminous and perfect image of the Creator. If man is by nature a rational animal, spirits are by nature immaterial and pure intelligences, who, in the pursuit of knowledge, are unhampered by limitations of sense and of gross material elements. If man acquires truth by ratiocination, spirits attain it by intuitive vision. If a man's inferior intellect can reach perfection in the knowledge of truth only by discursive mental operations, only by reasoning from one known truth to another, spirits by their superior intellectual powers can at once behold in every truth presented to their gaze all that is contained therein, as effects in their causes and causes in their effects; and, in consequence, they are called pure intelligences,

while man by reason of his discursive method is called rational.<sup>1</sup>

This intellectual perfection is essential to the nature of every purely spiritual being, whether angelic or demoniacal, and, therefore, even after sin, remains as long as that spiritual nature continues to exist. When in punishment for their rebellion against the Creator, the fallen angels were cast out of heaven, and stripped of those supernatural endowments that were in no manner proper to their nature, they retained all that was natural or essential to their spiritual existence and activity. In consequence, those evil spirits still possess unimpaired their natural powers of intellect, and, in extent of range and in depth of penetration, excel mortal man more than the wisest philosopher does the untutored savage.

Though these fallen spirits can perceive many things which are beyond the scope of our limited mental vision, nevertheless, they have, like man, their limitations in regard to prophecy. All future events may be known either in themselves or in their causes.<sup>2</sup> One class of causes always and necessarily produce their effects, and these, therefore, may be foretold with certainty, as an astronomer foretells an eclipse. There is, however, another class of causes which, while generally bringing forth their effects, yet do not always and necessarily do so, and in consequence, their action can be predicted not, indeed, with certainty, but only with reasonable conjecture, as when a weather observer foretells a local rain as probable. As evil spirits have, however, a deeper and more universal knowledge than man, and are, moreover, acquainted with hidden powers of nature, they can perceive better the relation between the first and second class of causes and their effects, and consequently can conjecture future events more frequently and with greater preciseness, just as a physician who has a clearer knowledge, not only of the nature and cause of his patient's malady, but also of its efficient remedy, can better prognosticate his restoration to health. There are, however, other causes whose effects depend

1. S. Thomas, *Summa Theol.* 1 Pars. Qu. 58.

2. *Ibidem*, IIa, IIae. Qu. 45.

upon what is erroneously called chance, or upon man's free will; and because such effects are not immutably determined in their causes, we can see them only in themselves, when they are actually present to our eyes. To foretell them with certainty is in the power of God alone; for only before His eternal and infinite mind, all future things are as present. "Show the things that are to come hereafter, and we shall know that ye are gods."<sup>1</sup> If evil spirits, therefore, cannot foresee with certainty future contingent effects of this third class of causes, they can, nevertheless, wisely conjecture about them, especially since, besides possessing superhuman acumen, they are also rich in the long experience of thousands of years, during which they have in the temptation of mankind thoroughly learned the ways of men, and acquired a wide and deep knowledge of human nature, and above all a clear insight into the workings of the human mind and heart.

Evil spirits, moreover, whose perverse nature is confirmed in evil and in falsehood, are never prone to tell truths, save as a means to their ulterior purpose of drawing man away from virtue and from God. This is well exemplified in the dealings of the Weird Sisters with Macbeth. Having won his confidence by the ruse of a seeming prophecy, which was in truth but a *post-factum* declaration, they proceed by deceptive enigmas to lead him blindly on to ruin. Their third prediction:

"All hail Macbeth, that shalt be a king hereafter,"

is based upon a well founded conjecture that they shall be able with the aid of his ruling passion of ambition, to induce him to seize the crown by bloody usurpation. The throne once attained, they purpose to lead him on to further crime by lying riddles of assured safety. These Macbeth interprets, as they conjectured, to his own advantage; but when in surprise he discovers their fiendish frauds, he exclaims in vexation of soul:

1. Isai. 41 :23.

"I pull in resolution, and begin  
To doubt the equivocation of the fiend  
That lies like truth.

. . . . .  
And be these juggling fiends no more believed,  
That palter with us in a double sense,  
That keep the word of promise to our ear,  
And break it to our hope."

## CHAPTER VII

### THE TEMPTATION OF MAN BY EVIL SPIRITS

To the Christian mind the tragedy of Macbeth gives sensible expression to the secret efforts of the Powers of evil whose purpose is to ruin man by means of his ruling passion. That all who will live godly lives must prepare their souls for trials and persecutions, is a divine axiom.<sup>1</sup> Temptation is the common lot of all; because man's present existence is by divine ordination but a short passing life of probation, in which he must align himself with one or the other of the two antagonistic spiritual forces, which have made earth their battle-ground of good against evil: in brief, man must in the present life choose to serve Satan as a slave or God as a free-man. These truths were as first principles to peoples of the Elizabethan age, and Shakespeare was in harmony with the thought of his day. Then, Christians of every type still accepted Sacred Scripture as the divinely revealed word of God. Its pages are full of the intermeddling of fallen angels with the affairs of men. It teaches that our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers and spirits of wickedness.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, it counsels us not to believe every spirit, but to try them, to see if they be of God.<sup>3</sup> The neglect of this counsel has, no doubt, caused many to be deceived by demons who appear as angels of light. If, on the authority of the Sacred Book, Shakespeare believed in the existence of good spirits who are God's "ministers of grace" and "guardians of men," he no less firmly believed in fallen angels, those counter spirits of evil that from envy and hatred tempt men to moral ruin. They try and experiment

1. Eccl. 2 :1 : 2 Tim. 3 :12.

2. Ephes. 6 :12.

3. 1 John 4.

with humankind in order to discover each one's natural disposition to virtue or to vice, with the sole purpose of injuring him by seducing him to sin.<sup>1</sup> Such is the special function of Satan and his legions, though too often wicked men wittingly or unwittingly share in his work. If Sacred Scripture sometimes ascribes temptations to God, it is in a wholly different sense. His trial of man is not to lead him to evil, but to disclose to others his good or evil character. "For the Lord your God trieth you that it may appear whether you love Him with all your heart, and with all your soul or no."<sup>2</sup> "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he hath been proved he shall receive the crown of life which God hath promised to them that love Him."<sup>3</sup>

There are, however, two extremes to be avoided concerning man's temptation. The one extreme is the position of those who expressly reject all demoniacal temptation; because it is, as they say, repugnant to the divine attributes of God, and because the demon's action upon the human soul is beyond our comprehension. Such a position is indeed natural to all who, unlike Shakespeare and his contemporaries, no longer hold Sacred Scripture to be the revealed word of God; but true Christians find in the Holy Book many examples of temptations by evil spirits. It was Satan who deceived man in Eden and attempted the same with Christ, the "Second Adam."<sup>4</sup> He corrupted Judas and inspired him to treason,<sup>5</sup> and led astray Ananias and Sapphira.<sup>6</sup> Our Savior affirms that the sower of cockle is the devil who snatches the word of life from the hearts of men.<sup>7</sup> We are exhorted to be vigilant against the demon, to resist him in faith, and to put on the armor of God that we may stand against his wiles.

This doctrine, so emphatically inculcated in Sacred Scripture, has, moreover, been defended and expounded by the early Fathers of the Greek and Latin Church.<sup>8</sup> None of them

1. St. Thom., 1 p. - Q. 114. A. 2.

2. Deut. 13:3.

3. James 1:12.

4. Gen. 3; Apoc. 12; Matth. 4; Mark 1; Luke 4.

5. John 13:2, 27.

6. Acts 5:3.

7. Matth. 13:39; Luke 8:12.

8. Cf. Card. Mazzella, *De Deo Creante*, p. 304.

perceived in man's temptation anything repugnant to the attributes of God; for Satan's activity is limited by the ordination of Divine Providence, and, whatever his power, he is unable to force the human will. Hence, how forceful soever be temptation, it is never beyond man's power of resistance, when strengthened by the grace of God. St. Paul affirms: "God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able, but will make also with temptation issue that you may be able to bear it."<sup>1</sup> St. Jerome (A. D. 345) in treating of the Savior's temptation in the desert, writes: "Cast thyself down; that is the voice of the devil who always seeks to hurl men down to ruin; he can persuade, but he cannot drag down."<sup>2</sup> St. Chrysostom (A. D. 347), speaking of those who frequent the theaters rather than the Church, says: "Who has separated them from the sacred sheepfold? You all have the same human nature, but not the same will; hence he has deceived them, but not you."<sup>3</sup> St. Augustine (A. D. 354) writes: "Christ came and bound the devil. But if he is bound, why does he still prevail so much? It is true he dominates the tepid, the negligent, and those devoid of a true fear of God. Bound like a chained dog, he can bite only those that in deadly security approach him. He can harm none save the willing; for he injures not by force, but by persuasion; he seeks, but he cannot extort our consent."<sup>4</sup> St. Chrysostom affirms that God permits temptation for the punishment of sin, for the correction of the sinner, as well as for the manifestation of his own glory; for by temptation the name of Christ is glorified, since by His power the Christian conquers the demon.<sup>5</sup>

This doctrine of the early Fathers is not only in conformity with the teaching of Holy Writ, but is also illustrated by innumerable examples, of which the most striking is perhaps that chronicled in the poetical book of Job. "As a work of genius and of art it occupies well-nigh the first rank in

1. 1 Cor. 10:13.

2. In Cap. IV. Matth.

3. Hom. 3 de Daemon.

4. Serm. 37 Inter Opera S. Aug.

5. Hom. 1 de Daemon N. 6.

Hebrew literature, and is unsurpassed in sublimity of imaginative thought by any poem of antiquity.”<sup>1</sup> The hero is an inhabitant of the land of Hus, a man who is “upright and just, fearing the Lord and avoiding evil.” In the poem, God is pictured, on the one hand, as delighting in the virtue of his servant, and Satan, on the other, as boasting in confidence of his power to seduce him. This confidence springs from his belief that Job’s piety is prompted by worldly motives. By God’s permission, the demon, with the one exception that he spare Job’s life, is allowed to test his fidelity by the most severe sufferings. Having stricken him in succession with six great afflictions, Satan discovers that instead of shaking his loyalty to God, he but causes his heroic virtue to shine the more brilliantly. In his last attempt, the demon finds auxiliaries in Eliphaz, Baldad, and Sophar, friends of the afflicted man. As friends, they come to condole with him; but in the erroneous view that suffering is always the result of evil doing, they sit with him in his terrible affliction of mind and body, and day after day, drone into his ears their conviction that he is a great sinner, and that he should repent and confess his transgressions, and perhaps the Lord will forgive him. Job’s insistence upon his innocence, they blame, resent, and stigmatize as rank hypocrisy. Their rash judgments, are, however, rebuked by the Lord, who, coming in the whirlwind, defends his servant’s innocence, puts an end to his long sufferings, glorifies his well-tried fidelity, and crowns his victory over men and the demon with wondrous munificence. Job’s trial by the demon, like that of Macbeth’s, is an external manifestation of secret temptations that are experienced by many a Christian. Man alone with his natural forces can effect little against the greater and preternatural powers of tempting demons; but, like Job, the Christian is, under trial, fortified secretly by supernatural aid, or grace, all unseen by the tempter, and, in consequence, is enabled to conquer the

1. “The poetry of the book of Job is not only equal to that of any other of the sacred writings, but is superior to them all, except those of Isaiah alone. As Isaiah is the most sublime, David the most pleasing and tender, so Job is the most descriptive of all the inspired prophets.”—The Poetry of the Hebrews, Blair.

arch-enemy of God and man; and from his victory results a manifold good: the Christian is roused to vigilance, perceives his own weakness, turns to God in deepened faith and humility, strengthens his virtue, merits for himself, gives glory to his heavenly Father, and by defeating the malicious efforts of a superior being, humbles the gigantic pride of Satan, and overwhelms him with confusion.

Since, therefore, man's temptation is not in conflict with the attributes of God, we pass to the other assertion, that temptation by Satan is inadmissible, because we do not understand his action upon the human soul. Such an assertion seems inane and forceless; for no difficulty however great can nullify a truth, since it arises not from the truth itself, but from the limitations of our mind; and especially is this the case with the truths of the unseen and preternatural order. Even within our own visible and tangible creation are there not many facts of whose existence we cannot doubt, though we do not know how they happen? In like manner, the Poet, like all Christians, accepts the fact of diabolical temptation on the authority of divine revelation, since, he is convinced that such temptation is neither absurd in itself nor repugnant to reason. If man's spiritual soul and its activities offer many difficulties to psychologists, it is but natural that, in view of our material bounds and imperfect mode of sense perception, even greater difficulties should exist concerning the invisible action of immaterial spirits upon other spiritual existences like the human soul.

To meet these difficulties, the Angelic Doctor offers in his exhaustive treatise of the *Summa*<sup>1</sup> certain lucid principles in explanation of Satan's mode of tempting man. To tempt is the same as to move the will in some manner to evil, and man's will may be moved *interiorly* by acting upon it and directly inclining it against moral rectitude. Such interior action on the will is possible to the Creator alone; for as He is the efficient cause of our intellectual nature and its free will, so He alone, as its cause, can move it interiorly. Satan can move the will *exteriorly*, either by proposing some object

1. 1 pars., Q. 3 et Q. 114.

soliciting it to evil, or by exciting the passions or sensitive appetites; for it is manifest that in proportion as a man's passions are aroused, his will grows weaker and leaves him more prone to consent; hence, by moving man's bodily spirits and humors Satan can make him more disposed to sin, as for instance, to anger or concupiscence. Evil spirits, furthermore, can tempt man by visibly proposing an object which allures him to sin;<sup>1</sup> for appearing in some visible form, they can sensibly speak and persuade to evil: thus Satan tempted our protoparent in Eden and our Savior in the desert. An adept from long experience in the use of snares and stratagems, the "old serpent" is wont to assume various disguises, sometimes, as an angel of light, tempting man to simulated good, and again by assault and violence. It was thus that, according to well authenticated facts, he tempted many of the saints, and in recent times the Venerable Curé d'Ars. It was thus that in the visible form of the Weird Sisters, evil spirits accosted Macbeth, and entangled him in their snares. His curiosity, fanned by an evil passion, made him an easy victim. Satan, says St. Augustine, wishes to excite among men a greater curiosity concerning occult matters, so that, being implicated in their observance, they may become more curious and get themselves more entangled in the manifold snares of pernicious error.<sup>2</sup> He is wont gradually to insinuate himself, as in the case of the Weird Sisters, until he has his victim within his power, and then he works on him his evil will. This is well exemplified in the votaries of Spiritism. This ism is not a new discovery of science, as some pretend, or some new light come into the world, but simply the recrudescence of the practice of necromancy with which non-Christian nations are only too familiar, and which the Church has in every age most emphatically condemned. Spiritists, in consequence of their disregard of the divine command, which forbids all superstitious practices and dealings with evil spirits, are deprived of God's grace against the tempter, and, abandoned to their folly, become the blind dupes of lying

1. St. Thom. de Malo, C. 3 A. 4.

2. Apud Summa Theol. IIæ, IIææ. Qu. 96, A. 3, ad 2.

spirits, who lead them to deny the truth of the incarnation of the Son of God, of His supernatural religion, of sin and its future punishment, and of the essential distinction between vice and virtue, until, in fine, they lose all notion of morality, and in many cases their end is insanity or suicide. From his own experience, says Dr. W. Potter, who was formerly a spiritist: "They teach that there is no high, no low, no good, no bad. That murder is right, adultery is right, lying is right, slavery is right. That nothing we can know can injure the soul or retard its progress. That it is wrong to blame any; that none should be punished; that man is a machine and not to blame for his conduct."<sup>1</sup> The late Professor Lombroso, after long experimenting with spiritism, manifested much anxiety from fear of losing his mind; and the late Professor James of Harvard University, an eminent psychical investigator of the preternatural, displayed a very distinct leaning to the Catholic view of the proscribed cult.<sup>2</sup> The words of St. John, which were called forth by the superstitions of a pagan world, are clearly applicable to our Materialistic age: "Every spirit that dissolveth Jesus is not of God; and this is Antichrist of whom you have heard that he cometh, and he is now already in the world."<sup>3</sup>

Satan employs another method of temptation, that of invisibly proposing an object alliciting to sin; and this he can effect by his preternatural power of moving and disturbing man's imagination; for it is manifest that imaginary apparitions are sometimes caused in man from local mutations of his bodily spirits and humors. The demon can again invisibly propose an object by inward and preternatural action upon the senses by means of the humors of the body, in consequence of which the senses will be diversely affected.<sup>4</sup> Hence, though evil spirits have no power to act on man's will interiorly, they can, nevertheless, by presenting objects to the senses, by rousing the imagination, by stimulating the pas-

1. Cf. *Modern Spiritism*, J. Godfrey Raupert, 2 Edition, p. 201.

2. *Spiritualistic Phenomena and Their Interpretation*, by J. Godfrey Raupert.

3. 1 John 4:3.

4. St. Thomas, *Summa Theol.* 1 pars., Q. 111, A. 4.

sions, and by external suggestion, exteriorly incite the will to evil. Persons once in their power, they confirm in sinful habits by inspiring them with a false feeling of security. If such persons desire to turn from evil, they disturb them with fears, harass them with imaginary obstacles, perplex them with sophistical reasonings, and entangle them more and more in their snares, until, sunk in the quagmire of despair, they resign themselves to their fate as did Macbeth in the words:

. . . "I am in blood  
Stepp'd in so far that, should I wade no more,  
Returning were as tedious as go o'er."

Opposed to the one extreme that denies man's temptation by Satan, is the other no less odious, which affirms that all sin is instigated by the devil? Though Satan be the indirect and remote cause of all sin,<sup>1</sup> because he seduced our protoparent, from whom all receive their fallen human nature with its proneness to evil, he is not, however, in any manner the direct cause of every sin. Sacred Scripture clearly teaches that not all sins are committed at the instigation of Satan. "The imagination and thought of man's heart are prone to evil from his youth;"<sup>2</sup> "Every man is tempted by his own concupiscence, being drawn away and allured;"<sup>3</sup> "whence are wars and contentions among you? are they not from your concupiscences which war in your members?"<sup>4</sup> Our Savior teaches: "From the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false testimonies, and blasphemies."<sup>5</sup> Man's freedom in his sinful nature affords an all-sufficient cause for sin; for it is indeed nothing strange that man, who always bears within his fallen nature a domestic enemy in his conflicting passions, should often sin without the instigation of Satan. Hence St. Chrysostom (A. D. 347) says, that man's sins arise from human depravity, and St. Gregory (A. D. 326) expands the same truth in the following lines:

1. St. Thomas, Summa Theol. 1 p., Q. 114, A. 3.
2. Gen. 8:21.
3. St. Jam. 1:14.
4. St. Jam. 4:1.
5. St. Matth. 15:19.

“Quid culpam in hostem semper ipsi vertimus  
Cum nostra praestent robur ipsi crimina!  
Te criminare prorsus, aut certe magis,  
Ignis tuus nam est: flamma vere daemonis.<sup>1</sup>

Since, then, man's passions kindle the fires of sin and Satan but fans their flame, his power is proportioned to the moral disposition of the person tempted, and is, therefore, greater or less in accordance as a man cultivates or flouts the moral virtues, and restrains or indulges his passions. Passions, when indulged in their tendency to evil, necessarily create in man an affinity with fallen spirits or demons, and, in consequence, there arises between them an harmonious relation, an affinity, one for the other, and man's soul, by reason of this secret affinity, not only attracts evil spirits, but even welcomes their visits. Thus Macbeth, when bent on crime, gladly welcomed the Weird Sisters in their first visit, and afterwards eagerly sought their presence; and Lady Macbeth, intent on murder, invoked them as “the spirits that tend on mortal thoughts, murderous ministers that wait on nature's mischief.” Their power is, therefore, always relative, because it depends on the affinitive tendencies of man's passions to evil, and in proportion as those tendencies are stronger or weaker, they give these demons a greater or less power in leading him to moral ruin.

1. Why always impute our sins to Satan, when our passions give him power to tempt us? Let us blame ourselves at least in the main; for we kindle the fire, and he but fans the flames.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE TEMPTATION OF MACBETH

To judge aright of Shakespeare's metaphysical, moral and religious meaning of the drama, it is necessary to guard against the ordinary critical error concerning the origin of Macbeth's criminal purpose. To suppose that the Poet represents the spirits of darkness as absolutely and gratuitously seducing Macbeth, manifestly vitiates and debases the moral to be drawn from the tragedy. Hence, the need of solving the question, whether Macbeth projected the murder of Duncan, because of his encounter with the Weird Sisters, or whether they accosted him after the projection of murder, because, says Mr. Fletcher, "They are privileged to see the mind's construction, where human eye cannot penetrate—in the mind itself."<sup>1</sup> But can evil spirits penetrate the human mind and read therein its secret, hidden thoughts?<sup>2</sup> Sacred Scripture affirms the contrary by attributing such power to God alone: "Hear thou from Heaven, from thy high dwelling place: for thou only knowest the hearts of the children of men;"<sup>3</sup> "The heart is perverse and unsearchable, who can know it? I am the Lord that search the heart and prove the reins;"<sup>4</sup> "Searching into the divisions of the soul, and the spirit, He is a discernor of the thoughts and the intents of the heart."<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the fact of the Saviour's reading the secret thoughts of men, is adduced by the Evangelists as one of the proofs of His divinity.<sup>6</sup> Upon this point St. Jerome argues: "Jesus saw their secret thoughts, and no one

1. *Witches Pharmacopela*, p. 142. Apud Furness.

247. 2. Card. Mazzella *De Objecto Cognitionis Angelicæ, De Deo Creante*, p.

3. 11 Paralip 6 :30.

4. Jerem. 17 :9-10.

5. Heb. 4 :12.

6. Math. 9 :4; 12 :25

can read our secret thoughts save God alone; therefore Christ is God." St. Ambrose says: "The Lord wishing to save sinners, proved His divinity by His knowledge of their secret thoughts."<sup>1</sup> St. Augustine says of the saintly Job: "He worshipped God, gave alms, and what he did in his heart no one knew, not even Satan, but God knew."<sup>2</sup> Such secret thoughts are, however, understood to comprehend only interior acts of the intellect and will, which are in no manner manifested exteriorly either by word or sign, or by movement of any sense or passion. "Satan can know," affirms St. Jerome, "the interior acts of man's intellectual soul only by exterior movements."<sup>3</sup> And says St. Augustine: "Spirits know, not only the dispositions of men when manifested by words, but also their intellectual thoughts when expressed by certain sensible signs."<sup>4</sup>

Evil spirits, therefore, cannot know man's secret thoughts and purposes with certainty. If they can, at times, by reason of their greater intellectual acumen and experience, conjecture them more or less correctly, nevertheless, they labor by various wiles to discover man's interior disposition with the view of tempting him to that vice to which he is most prone. St. Ignatius Loyola, in a treatise on discernment of spirits, lays down the following rule: "As an able general who wishes to capture a citadel first takes a careful survey to find where it is weakest, and most open to attack, and then begins the assault, so the arch-enemy of our human nature carefully examines our state and our position in regard to the theological, cardinal, and moral virtues, and then exerts all his power against us at that particular part where we are weakest. We should, therefore, be beforehand with him, and examine in what we are most deficient, or into what fault we most frequently fall."<sup>5</sup> But the weakest part of man's nature and the most open to attack is his ruling, or predominant passion. If once mastered, it becomes the most powerful engine

1. In Luc. L. 5, n. 12.

2. Serm. 91, de Script.

3. In Ps. 16.

4. De Divinat. c. 5.

5. Spiritual Exercises, Discernment of Spirits, 1st Treatise, Rule 14.

for good; but if uncontrolled, it enslaves man and inevitably leads him to the lowest depths of degradation. Macbeth's ruling passion, which he nurtured secretly, was an evil ambition for the crown, and through the sympathy which evil has for evil, it attracted the attention of malevolent spirits, whose purpose was to quicken the wicked design already germinating in his mind, and to foment the mischief already brewing in his heart. They knew better than his royal master, who tells us, "There is no art to find the mind's construction in the face." They visit him, because he invites them, because in secret sympathy with them he willfully opens wide the portals of his inner world which they enter, and breathing into his soul the contagion of hell they quicken its germs of evil into vitality and action.

Another Ignatian principle is that "evil spirits, speaking only to the imagination and the senses, act upon the human soul according to the attitude it assumes toward them. If a man be friendly, *they flatter him*; if hostile they trouble him." This principle is exemplified in the action of the Weird Sisters upon Macbeth. At their salutation:

"All hail, Macbeth, that shalt be king hereafter,"

he is not only visibly surprised at their knowledge of his secret thoughts and aspirations, but also *pleased* with their *flattering words*, which he accepts as true prophecy. He is, moreover, sorely disappointed when, deaf to his eager command to tell him more, they vanish into airy nothing before his very eyes. They must wait for the poisoned leaven to ferment and work havoc in his soul:

MACBETH. *Stay, you imperfect speakers, tell me more:*

. . . Say from whence

You owe this strange intelligence? or why

Upon this blasted heath you stop our way

With such prophetic greetings? *Speak I charge you.*

(Witches vanish.)

*Would they had stayed!"*

His subsequent action, when doubting whether the "supernatural soliciting" was good or evil, recalls another Ignatian principle, which teaches how to distinguish good from evil spirits by their mode of action and the end they seek. "As the good angel's object is the welfare of the soul and the bad angel's its unhappiness, it follows that if, in the progress of our thoughts, all is well and tends to good, there is no occasion for uneasiness; but if, on the contrary, we perceive any deviation whatsoever toward evil or even a slight unpleasant agitation, there is reason to fear that the action is that of the evil spirit." Macbeth, as a Christian, was no less aware than Banquo that the Weird Sisters were preternatural "instruments of darkness"—agents of the "Father of Lies," and that any communication with them was not only dangerous but illicit. But their flattering promise of royalty was unctious to his ambitious soul, and prompted an ardent desire that it prove true. Banquo perceives his mental agitation, and on hearing his ardently expressed hope of the crown, cautions him, according to the Ignatian principle, to beware of "the instruments of darkness," who often tempt man by telling truths with the intent of winning his confidence so as the more surely to lead him on to evil:

BANQUO. . . . But it is strange;  
 And oftentimes to win us to our harm,  
 The instruments of darkness tell us truths,  
 Win us with honest trifles, to betray 's  
 In deepest consequence."

Heedless of Banquo's warning, Macbeth in self-musing questions why he should not accept as true the prophetic promise of the crown. Had not the Weird Sisters prefaced it with two other truths? Hercin, however, lay precisely the snare of the tempters. The two truths—that he should be thane of Glamis and of Cawdor—were *post-factum* declarations which, because unknown to Macbeth when announced by the Weird Sisters, he considered real prophecies. On the other hand, he suspects that "the supernatural soliciting" cannot be good: since it suggests horrible images of treason and murder, and,

though these are yet but fantastical, they fill him with fear and abhorrence :

“(*Aside*) Two truths are told,  
As happy prologues to the swelling act  
Of the imperial theme.—I thank you, gentlemen.—  
(*Aside*) This supernatural soliciting  
Cannot be ill; cannot be good: if ill,  
Why hath it given me earnest of success,  
Commencing in a truth? I amthane of Cawdor;  
If good, why do I yield to that suggestion  
Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair  
And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,  
Against the use of nature? Present fears  
Are less than horrible imaginings.  
My thought, whose murder is yet but fantastical,  
Shakes so my single state of man that function  
Is smothered in surmise, and nothing is  
But what is not.”

Happy, had been Macbeth had he been true to his better self; happy, had he followed the light of reason, which exposed the wickedness of “the supernatural soliciting,” that prompted criminal suggestions. But, with will dominated by his master passion, his nobler self was deaf to the voice of conscience. Hence, neither rejecting the temptation nor repressing his ambition, he continues to love and foster it, until in giant strength it crushes all opposition, impels him deliberately “to jump the life to come,” and in barter for the crown to “give his eternal jewel to the common enemy of man.” In Macbeth is pictured the moral history of every man. In bodying forth the evil within the heart, temptation makes each one conscious of his true character. Tried by temptation, like gold in the fire, man learns whether his inclination is to virtue or to vice. If some fall in the combat, others are victorious; and others again remain uncontaminated, because exempt from temptation. Exemption is indeed a great grace, for which the Lord commands us to pray: “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” In the Weird Sisters the Poet clearly discloses that the influence

of evil spirits over man, is measured by his own character; for their malignity extends only to minds predisposed to evil. Some, like Macbeth, they inflame to crime, others, like Banquo, they cannot sway. They are not, like the Fates of old, irresistible, and this truth Shakespeare inculcates in all his tragedies. He knows no blind fatality nor makes demons the masters of man's fate; but always portrays the Christian idea, that we, in the freedom of our will, are the architects of our own destiny.

The demons most opportunely accost Macbeth on the blasted heath "in the day of success," when, in the glory of his double victory, his mind broods in exaltation over his ambitious hopes. This the Weird Sisters knew, and accordingly gave voice to salutations which are in harmony with thoughts that preoccupy his mind. Their prophecies and promises are but the echo of his own secret ambition, and though they startle, yet they interest and influence him, because in conformity with his own wishes. The power of the Weird Sisters lay, therefore, in Macbeth's affinity with evil; lay in his ruling passion, which, begetting an inordinate ambition for the crown, gave birth to evil thoughts and regicidal purposes; and these evil thoughts and purposes the Weird Sisters harp upon, and stimulate, and strengthen into resolution; and, when from vacillation his resolution weakens, they summon a feminine ally, through whose agency they regain ascendancy, drive him on from crime to crime, and finally vanquish him when in surprise he falls in overwhelming ruin.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE CHARACTER OF MACBETH

The drama of Macbeth has been called a tragedy of character. If its hero resembles Richard III. in certain qualities, he differs much in others. From the first, Richard is pictured as a formed villain, whose intellectual pride and royal ambition have so smothered his moral nature that he appears before us, boasting brazenly of his wickedness, and gloating over villainous plots and prospective murders:

“I am determined to prove a villain.  
Plots have I laid, inductions dangerous,  
By drunken prophecies, libels, and dreams  
To set my brother Clarence and the King  
In deadly hate the one against the other.”<sup>1</sup>

The tragedy does nothing more than graphically describe with dramatic effect the wickedness of a monstrous villain. Not so, however, is the tragedy of Macbeth. He is introduced to us as a renowned warrior, loyal to his king, and honored by his peers. “A worthy gentleman,” whose sense of duty, and love and esteem of honor, have preserved his name untainted. Shakespeare, however, by portraying in scene after scene his gradual transformation from good to evil, has given us a wondrous piece of biography. We move along step by step with the hero of the story, and perceive him, in opposition to reason and conscience, yielding himself to the influence of preternatural powers of evil, and slowly descending amid fear and terror down to the dark abyss of despair and destruction.

In his character are revealed strange inconsistencies which

1. Rich. III, 1.

awaken unusual interest. As a free born wanderer over hills and glens, his youth was schooled amid the solitude of moorlands, wilds, and crags, where weird voices of the winds, torrents, and roaring waters, spoke in tones strange yet soothing and mysterious. Amid such environments his romantic nature and poetic fancy found unretarded development. If he appears a dreamer in the drama, wild in fancy, meditative, and often lapsing into self-musing and moody introspection, he is, nevertheless, strange to say, in the world of affairs a practical man of high energy and courage, and a warrior bold and instant in action. In temperament sanguine and nervous, he is naturally gifted with large powers and capacity; and his experience in military life has won for him the proud distinction of supreme commander in the battles of his country.

Macbeth's sphere is the outward world of action. In it he proves himself equal to every emergency. Poorly disciplined, however, in the inner life of thought, he is unfamiliar with the intellectual world, and his mind is readily perplexed, and his imagination disturbed in presence of some mental or moral crisis. Marked by an intellect susceptible and reflective, his mind is often overmastered by illusory impressions; hence, though bold in action, mental conflicts concerning external and practical consequences subject him to temporary vacillations. "The strangeness of events that surround him fills him with amazement and fear; the preternatural sights that he sees and the unearthly music that he hears, confuse his world of reality with the world of fancy, till all is tumult within and without his mind." The fervid imagination of his poetic mind reveals his romantic nature at every stage. It makes him susceptible to the mysterious suggestions of preternatural beings; it enables him in lofty tones to blazon his blackest deeds in noble thoughts, clothed in glorious word painting; it makes him sensitive to fears of his own fanciful creations, and rouses intellectual emotions and terrors that leave him a prey to self-torture and self-excusing in a war with conscience. Such terrors might have been met with a smile of indifference by an abandoned crim-

inal like ~~Richard III.~~; but Macbeth, still unhardened in crime, ~~they~~ haunt by day, and by night ghost-like keep ceaseless vigil about his sleepless couch.

An intense selfishness, ~~unrestrained~~ by moral principles or sympathetic feelings, dominates Macbeth. Under the impulse of an irritated imagination, it rouses him to a morbid sensitiveness which, while not inconsistent with great physical courage, nevertheless generates in him a remarkable moral cowardice. If he shrinks from the murder of Duncan, it is not from "compunctious visitings of nature," but, because his lively imagination conjures up the impossibility of masking his guilt, of escaping consequent odium, and the retribution, which his crime must necessarily bring in the present life. But, once having snatched the crown by secret murder, his criminal position startles him into terrible apprehensions, and to escape them he perpetrates further crimes. That he commits subsequent murders with less agitation than that of Duncan's, is not inconsistent with moral cowardice; by the first crime he gratified his master passion of ambition, by later murders he aims to attain security by ridding himself of torturing, guilty fears. Having won the crown by blood, he resolves to wear it at any cost.

If Macbeth fails in moral courage, personal valor is, nevertheless, his chief characteristic. Tried in many a personal conflict on the field of battle, his bravery never failed him. In fact, so ingrained was it in his nature that if sometimes, under strange and surprising conditions, it was momentarily checked by moral or religious scruples and rational fears of foreseen consequences, it was sure to reassert itself, as soon as the temporary agitation had passed. Failure to distinguish between moral and physical courage has; no doubt, led certain critics to question the latter trait of Macbeth's character. The drama, however, throws not the slightest shadow on his personal courage; on the contrary, the Poet throughout the tragedy insists on his hero's manly character, and even before his entrance causes others to proclaim and eulogize his martial valor. The wounded captain, returning from battle, sounds his praises to the King:

## THE CHARACTER OF MACBETH

“For brave Macbeth—well he deserves that name—  
Disdaining fortune, with his brandish’d steel,  
Which smok’d with bloody execution,  
Like valor’s minion carved out his passage  
Till he faced the slave;  
And fixed his head upon our battlements.”

In the conflict he is “Bellona’s bridegroom lapp’d in proof,” and again, an eagle among sparrows and a lion among hares. Furthermore, Macbeth’s well known intrepidity is admitted by his enemies, and remains unchallenged by all who suffer from his cruelty and oppression. Moreover, his frequent appeals to his own conscious valor are convincing proofs of Shakespeare’s purpose to create in him a hero of dauntless spirit and unfaltering courage. Macbeth’s claims, it is clear, would, if unfounded, only degrade him to the low level of a Falstaffian braggart, who would merit nothing more than ridicule and laughter. His own idea of courage seems one with manliness of character. To this he insistently lays claim. When the woman that sways his affection would in angry words attaint him a coward, he is quick to repel the aspersion in terms that time has made a proverb expressive of true courage:

“LADY MACBETH. . . . Wouldst thou have that  
Which thou esteem’st the ornament of life.  
And live a coward in thine own esteem,  
Letting ‘I dare not’ wait upon ‘I would,’  
Like the poor cat in the adage?”

MACBETH. Prithee, peace:  
*I dare do all that may become a man;  
Who dares do more is none.*”

Again, to the challenge, “Art thou a man?” he replies:

“Ay, and a bold one, that dare look on that  
Which might appal the devil.”

At the disappearance of the ghostly, blood-boltered Banquo, his first exclamation is,

“Why, so; being gone, I am a man again;”

and, in fine, on discovering the equivocation of the fiends “that lie like truth,” he affirms, “it hath cowed my better part of man.” This conscious manly courage, in which he so often glories, is manifestly his characteristic trait. Before it, weak moral scruples give way, but scruples of worldly honor still sway him, as natural to a man who in pride of life prizes the esteem of his fellow-men. Hence, human respect and love of fame, even more than the dread of an insecure throne, halt his limping purpose. He is convinced that.

“Murder, though it hath no tongue, will speak  
With most miraculous organ.”<sup>1</sup>

The haunting thought arouses his imagination to picture the folly of exchanging safe honors and golden opinions for universal hatred and eternal obloquy. This thought more than moral scruples affrights him, checks his lawless impulse, and impels him in vacillation to ruminate upon the *pros* and *cons* of his royal aspirations. But, when his evil tempters have fanned the embers of his smoldering ambition into flame with assured hopes of success; when his wife, by exposing how he may gain the throne and yet escape discovery, has in daring and scornful impatience beaten down the fears that unmanned him: his courage is at once unfettered, and he leaps forward in feverish activity to seize the prize coveted by his wayward ambition. Henceforth, amid the storm of his overmastering passion, he is driven on by the impact of his one purpose, and, with full faith in the powers of evil, he in superstitious awe fatuously strides on under their pernicious influence to verify their prophecy. The murder once done, he can waver no longer. As a usurping monarch, ruled by suspicions and fears of treachery, he must face further crime, and his energy and fixed desperation against every enemy are only intensified by further counsel of the Weird Sisters.

1. Hamlet, II, II.

The freedom of the human will is the basis of moral responsibility. Without it there can be neither vice nor virtue; no one is virtuous for doing what he cannot help doing, nor vicious for doing what he cannot possibly avoid. Hence, all vice and virtue are referred to the human will, the freedom of which is presupposed by Christian morality. This truth is emphasized in the present tragedy, wherein Shakespeare pictures the human will as the moral principle of action. If Macbeth's will, strengthened by an eager ruling passion, which is abetted by preternatural agencies, proves weak in resistance to evil, it is because, unenergized by moral principles of religion, it lacks the sway and guidance of conscience in the choice of the ambitious object, and in the means of attaining it. In contrast with Banquo, he is less religious by nature and less influenced by moral precepts and, in consequence, has less energy to reject the wrong. That religion sat lightly upon him is disclosed at his first meeting with the Weird Sisters. Though strongly suspecting their fiendish nature, he greets them gladly, believes their words, and feels gratified at their flattering promise; while Banquo looks upon them with abhorrence, distrusts them, and neither "begs nor fears their favors nor their hate." Later, when royal messengers hail Macbeth, thane of Cawdor, he is less surprised than gratified, and in self-musing mutters:

. . . "(*Aside*) Glamis and thane of Cawdor!  
*The greatest is behind.*"

Now ensnared, as the fiends intended, he places full confidence in their third promise—that of the crown. Banquo, on the contrary, is perplexed and exclaims with displeasure, "What can the devil speak true?" Unaware that two predictions of the Weird Sisters were but *post-factum* declarations, he is naturally mystified and troubled, but, guided by the teaching of his Christian religion, he suspends judgment, and is saved from error and deception. Henceforth, Macbeth's passion of ambition daily dominates him more and more; but the bright dreams of royalty in which he revels are often

overclouded by the vision of murder, as the sole means of reaching the throne. The thought morbidly arouses fears, which are prompted, not by scruples of conscience, but by foreseen dangers of the enterprise. Though these fears induce irresolution and impel him to reflect in moody introspection upon the crime suggested, its motives, and its probable fatal consequences, they exhibit no awakening of his conscience to the moral heinousness of the crime. "Shakespeare," says Sir Henry Irving, "has in his text given Macbeth as one of the most bloody-minded, hypocritical villains in all his long gallery of portraits of men instinct with the virtues and the vices of their kind. He was a poet with his brain and a villain with his heart, as he himself bears witness, when at the close of Act III he announces his fixed intent on a general career of crime:"<sup>1</sup>

. . . "For mine own good,  
All causes shall give way: I am in blood  
Stepp'd in so far that, should I wade no more  
Returning were as tedious as go o'er:  
Strange things I have in head that will to hand;  
Which must be acted ere they may be scann'd."

If the Christian moralist finds nothing to palliate the guilt of Macbeth, not so the mental physiologist. "The subject of his study," says Mr. Bucknill,<sup>2</sup> "are the nerves rather than the conscience, the function of the brain rather than the power of the will. It is impossible to omit from calculation the influence of the supernatural event, which is not only the starting point of the action, but the remote cause of the mental phenomena." By ignoring man's free will, conscience, and the natural law which binds him, and concentrating attention solely upon the condition of his brain and nerves, mental physiologists have come to see in the habitual thief, a kleptomaniac, and in the confirmed drunkard, a dipsomaniac. But, if kleptomania be a morbid desire—a species of moral insanity

1. Character of Macbeth, a lecture delivered at Owens College, Manchester, December, 1894.

2. Mad Folks of Shakespeare.

actuating its subject to theft; if dipsomania be a drink madness—an irresistible craving for alcoholic liquor, both are, nevertheless, aberrations in the moral life; habitual indulgence of a passion, either of a man's higher or lower nature, necessarily leads to an abnormal condition of mind or body, and such abnormal conditions, when deliberately and voluntarily induced, are in so far culpable in their victim. Unlike the neurotic physiologist, the Christian moralist examines all causes concurring in producing a moral act, and if there be wanting in the culprit either full knowledge of the morality of the act, or deliberation, or freedom of choice, then he is inculpable for the evil deed. Macbeth, however, is perfectly aware of the heinousness of the crime contemplated, and in full deliberation weighs the motives for and against the murder, as well as its probable fatal consequences to himself. Vacillating for a time between hopes and fears, he exhibits no abnormal strain either of brain or nerves that impedes or overpowers his choice of action. On the contrary, he regrets that, aside from his vaulting ambition, he has "no spur to prick the sides" of his intent and to impel him to the bloody deed. The Weird Sisters do not drive him to the crime. They tempt him, indeed, because they find his evil nature predisposed to evil and, in consequence, expect him to take their equivocal suggestions in the most pernicious sense. Their temptation, however, leaves him full freedom of action, and if he hesitates at the crime, it is not from moral scruples, as certain critics think, but from fear of foreseen evil consequences to himself:

"If it were done when 't is done, then 't were well  
 It were done quickly; if the assassination  
 Could trammel up the consequence, and catch  
 With his surcease success; that but this blow  
 Might be the be-all and the end-all here,  
 But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,  
 We'd jump the life to come.'

Hence, he becomes irresolute from caution—such caution as prudence would, indeed, dictate to any sensible man, beset

by similar difficulties and dangers. Strong as is the ambitious impulse of his master passion and magnificent as is the prize coveted, he, nevertheless, sees the dangers so clearly that he would have been sensible enough to abandon the hazardous attempt, had not the one woman whom he loved and trusted—a woman of preternatural strength of will—undermined his caution and silenced his fears by persuading him that he could murder Duncan, seize the crown, and escape detection:

“MACBETH. If we should fail?

LADY MACBETH.

We fail.

But screw your courage to the sticking-place,  
And we'll not fail.

What cannot you and I perform upon  
Th' unguarded Duncan? What not put upon  
His spongy officers, who shall bear the guilt  
Of our great quell?

MACBETH. Bring forth men-children only;

For thy undaunted mettle should compose  
Nothing but males. Will it not be received,  
When we have marked with blood those sleepy two  
Of his own chamber, and used their very daggers  
That they have done 't?

LADY MACBETH. Who dares receive it other,  
As we shall make our griefs and clamors roar  
Upon his death?

MACBETH. I am settled, and bend up  
Each corporal agent to this terrible feat.  
Away, and mock the time with fairest show;  
False face must hide what the false heart doth know.”

Macbeth, it is clear, is not a callous adept in crime. “He feels,” says Kreyssic, “the enormity of his guilt with pain and horror only to be found in natures still unweakened and uncorrupted. But his morality is, from the beginning, more the result of habit and feeling than of thought and will. Whenever he rises out of the whirl of emotion and the fitful horror of crime to a calm contemplation of things, we find him busied in weighing, not his own moral scruples, but the expediency of his violent deeds. His instincts, as a man of

honor more than his sense of evil, cause him to shrink from the deed." Seldom troubled by moral restraints or actuated by religious principles or sentiments in ordinary life, he is roused to a real sense of religion only when distressed under pressure of a crisis. Hence, after the murder, when overcome by unforeseen sentiments of horror and guilt, which awaken his latent sense of religion, he complains that he could not join the chamberlains in prayer:

"One cried 'God bless us!' and 'Amen' the other,  
As they had seen me with these hangman's hands:  
Listening their fear, I could not say 'Amen'  
When they did say 'God bless us.'

LADY MACBETH. Consider it not so deeply.

MACBETH. But wherefore could not I pronounce 'Amen'?  
I had most need of blessing, and 'Amen'  
Stuck in my throat."

After the murder, the voice of conscience ceaselessly reproaches him, nor can further crime deafen him to its cries, nor despair stifle his remorse, which compels him to complain that he has "defiled his soul and put rancors in the vessel of his peace." Subsequent murders heighten his sense of guilt, and impel him to confess to Macduff that his soul is "too much charged with blood already."

Yet the torturing guilt, which afflicts his conscience, is no proof that his nature is deeply religious, or that moral principles habitually ruled his inner life. On the contrary, there is much evidence to show that neither a real love of religion nor of virtue for its own sake, had any root in him, either from intelligent choice, or from deep reflection. This truth the Poet emphasizes in a scene wherein Macbeth, if possessed of even small sympathy with moral goodness, must have displayed it prominently. His mind enclouded with doubt by the desperate dangers of the treason contemplated, he tears himself away from the banquet, in order to ponder undisturbed upon the various motives that restrain him from the murder of the King. If actuated by any sense of religion or regard for the moral order, he would surely, in the face

of so great a crime, have been roused to some degree of virtuous feeling or repugnance for the dastardly deed. Yet he is wholly concerned with immediate practical consequences; his soliloquy discloses no thought suggestive of sin and its retribution hereafter. Hope of Heaven and fear of hell, it is true, are not the noblest barriers against evil, but they are, nevertheless, far higher than motives of worldly failure or prosperity. Though his searching examination concern sin, retribution, and circumstances, which are specially calculated to rouse horror and compunction in a moral nature, his thought rises no higher than that murder is a dangerous game at which two parties can play, that his heartlessness will engender universal execration, and that ambition commonly defeats its own purpose; and, in fine, he confesses his readiness "to jump the life to come," if only sure of enjoying in mortal life the fruit of his crime.<sup>1</sup>

In the impersonations of Macbeth on the modern stage, tragedians, thinks Mr. Winter, the dramatic critic, do not sufficiently discriminate his character from that of Richard III. Shakespeare, it is true, endows these two personages with certain qualities in common. Both, under the inspiration and sway of a ruling passion, thirst for royal honors; both resort to the same means, and in their unhallowed triumph are haunted by the menacing ghosts of their victims; both, falling into frenzy and desperation, are on the field of battle slain by a special antagonist. Though these are striking similarities, both characters are, nevertheless, distinctly differentiated by other traits most radical and divergent. In the character of Macbeth, a certain weakness arising from infirmity of will, a remorseful consciousness of guilt, and a dread of ultimate disaster, are exhibited in contrast to his renowned valor, fearlessness, and fortitude; in that of Richard appears an unwavering and terrible strength that quakes in terror but once in the presence of inexorable Fate. The one yields himself to the sway of the demon, "the angel whom thou still hast served;" the other all-sufficient unto self, seems infernal power incarnate. The one is the slave of a

1. Cf. Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist, by R. G. Moulton, C. 7, *passim*.

tremulous imagination; the other of an intellect flaming and malignant. The one loves and suffers; the other knows no such passion and suffers but a transient spasm. The one in opposition to his better self succumbs to evil only under the impelling influence of a wife and the lying powers of darkness; the other needs neither a human nor superhuman abettor in crime. The one, in his pathetic fall, merits some sympathy; the other, perishing miserably, excites our abhorrence.<sup>1</sup> Notwithstanding Macbeth's moral weakness, which allows him to be swayed by his ruling passion, there is something in his character that sustains our interest from first to last. Whether we consider him halting in the pursuit of his ambition from an indecision that springs from a soul unhardened in crime, or view him as a polished mirror, reflecting the common frailty of human nature, when subjected to temptation, or as a warrior whose valor excites our admiration, he retains so strong a hold upon our sympathies, that it tends to palliate the horror provoked by his crimes. Hence when finally betrayed by the powers of evil and overtaken in surprise by the Nemesis of justice, he falls in valor, despairing of earth and heaven, his fate excites mingled sentiments, of which one is regret at the sad ruin of a soul that

“Falls like Lucifer, never to hope again.”

1. Cf. *Shakespeare on the Stage*, by William Winter, p. 467.

## CHAPTER X

### THE CHARACTER OF LADY MACBETH

The drama portrays the character of Lady Macbeth in admirable contrast with her husband's. Her leading trait is an indomitable force of will. In her nature, richly endowed, glows a ruling passion of ambition, which dwarfs every other human emotion, and enkindles an unholy thirst for the diadem. Her ambition, though highly criminal, appears in harmony with her grand gifts of intellect and will. Her character reveals her a woman powerful in features and majestic in bearing, whose brow the diadem befittingly adorns. Certain inferences, thinks Röttscher,<sup>1</sup> may be drawn concerning her person.

Royal in appearance, her countenance displays noble and energetic outlines, from whose every feature mean desires are banished; her glittering eye betrays a restless busy ardor, while the finely chiselled lips and nostrils eloquently express scorn of moral opposition to her ambitious resolve. Her queenly bearing, as well as the nobility of all her movements, proclaims her title to the highest earthly greatness and power.

If her looks enchain us, yet they chill us withal, for such features awaken no human sympathy, and only disclose the dominion of monstrous powers. Without a single scruple, save only a momentary compunction at the sight of Duncan, she appears a ruthless woman who, with natural instinct of affection for her own, can like a lioness prey upon her victim though she gambols with her cubs. Yet, says Friesen,<sup>2</sup> we should guard against aggravating the abhorrence

1. Shakespeare in seinen Höchsten Charackterbilden, apud The Variorum Shakespeare.

2. Jahrbuch der deutschen Shakespeare Gessellschaft, 1869, p. 224. Ibidem.

of her character and rather alleviate it, so that the intelligent reader may view her, not as a Northern Fury, nor a monster, still less, a heroine or martyr to conjugal love, but a woman capable of the greatest elevation, who, seized mysteriously by the magic of passion, falls the more terribly, and thus in spite of our horror of her crime, wrings from us our deepest sympathy.

Her character has been accorded a twofold interpretation. The one considers her a woman, who, selfishly ambitious for the crown, goads her husband on to murderous usurpation, a fiend in woman's form, a purely demoniacal incarnation of cruelty and wickedness. An able exponent of this interpretation is Mrs. Siddons. As her impersonation of the character long ruled the stage, and remains today in common opinion unsurpassed, her estimate deserves attention. She writes:

“Lady Macbeth had from childhood commanded all around her with a high hand; had uninterruptedly, perhaps, in that splendid station enjoyed all that wealth, all that nature had to bestow; she probably had no directors, no controllers, and in womanhood her fascinated lord had never once opposed her inclinations. In this astonishing creature, one sees a woman in whose bosom the passion of ambition had almost obliterated all the characteristics of human nature, in whose composition are associated all the subjugating powers of intellect, and all the charms and graces of personal beauty, a beauty which, I believe, is generally allowed to be most captivating to the other sex — fair, feminine, nay, perhaps even fragile,

‘Fair as the forms that move in fancy’s loom  
Float in light visions round the poet’s head.’

“Such a combination only, respectable in energy and strength of mind and captivating in feminine loveliness, could have composed a charm of such potency as to fascinate the mind of a hero so dauntless, a character so amiable, so honorable as Macbeth; — to seduce him to brave all the dangers of the present and all the terrors of the future world; and we are constrained even while we abhor his crimes, to pity the infatuated victim of such a thralldom.”<sup>1</sup>

1. Life of Mrs. Siddons by T. Campbell, II.

Mrs. Siddons' impersonation of Lady Macbeth's character was long supposed to be in harmony with Shakespeare's own conception, and the opinion was mainly based upon the fact that by the mouth of Malcolm he calls her a "fiend-like queen." This epithet, however, has not in modern times been accepted as a real index of her character. Had the utterance been the calm and deliberate judgment of an unbiased mind, its force would indeed be more conclusive; but what was more natural for the Poet, who is always true to nature, than to make the crown-prince body forth his overwrought feelings in impassioned terms, which are proportioned to his horror of the criminal and to his own supreme sense of wrong?

Another and later interpretation of Lady Macbeth's character, views her more leniently and is likely to supersede the former on the modern stage. It considers her neither a fiendish woman nor a monster of cruelty and wickedness. It ascribes her action, not to an evil nature, nor to a selfish desire for the crown, but to her deep love for her husband. It makes her overmastering desire of elevating him to the lofty pinnacle of his ambition, the all-sufficient motive for obvious wickedness. This interpretation is well expounded by Mrs. Jameson. She writes:

"The very passages in which Lady Macbeth displays the most savage and relentless determination, are so worded as to fill the mind with the idea of sex, and place the *woman* before us in all her dearest attributes, at once softening and refining the horror, and rendering it more intense. Thus she reproaches her husband for his weakness: 'From this time such I account thy love,' and 'come to my woman's breasts, and take my milk for gall,' and 'I have given suck, and know how tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me,' and, lastly, in the moment of extreme terror, comes that unexpected touch of feeling, so startling and yet so wonderfully true to nature, 'Had he not resembled my father,' etc. Thus in one of Weber's or Beethoven's grand symphonies, some unexpected minor chord or passage will steal on the ear, heard amid the magnificent crash of harmony, making the blood pause and filling the eyes with unbidden tears.

"She is nowhere represented as urging Macbeth on to new crimes;

so far from it that, when he darkly hints his purposed assassination of Banquo and she inquires his meaning, he replies, 'Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck, till thou approve the deed.' The same may be said of the destruction of Macduff's family. Every one must perceive how our detestation of the woman had been increased, if she had been placed before us as suggesting and abetting these additional cruelties into which Macbeth is hurried by his mental cowardice. If my feeling of Lady Macbeth's character be just to the conception of the Poet, then she is one who could steel herself to the commission of a crime from necessity or expediency, and be daringly wicked for a great end, but not likely to perpetrate gratuitous murders from any vague or selfish fears. She is nowhere brought into immediate connection with these horrors, and we are spared any flagrant proof of her participation in them." 1

While agreeing only in a general way with both of these fair advocates, Campbell, an eminent critic, differs from them, with reason, we think, on important points. He writes:

"Lady Macbeth is not thoroughly hateful, for she is not a virago, not an adulteress, not impelled by revenge. On the contrary, she expresses no feeling of personal malignity toward any human being in the whole course of her part. Shakespeare could have easily displayed her crimes in a more commonplace and accountable light by assigning some feudal grudge as a mixed motive of her cruelty to Duncan; but he makes her a murderess in cold blood, and from the sole motive of ambition, well knowing that, if he had broken up the inhuman serenity of remorselessness by the ruffling of anger, he would have vulgarized the beauties of the splendid Titaness

"By this entire absence of petty vice and personal virulence, and by concentrating all the springs of her conduct into the one determined feeling of ambition, the mighty Poet has given her character a statue-like simplicity which, though cold, is spirit-stirring from the wonder it excites and which is imposing, although its respectability consists, as far as the heart is concerned, in merely negative decencies. How many villains walk the earth in credit to their graves from the mere fulfilment of these negative decencies. Had Lady Macbeth been able to smother her husband's babbling, she might have been one of them.

"That the Poet intended us to conceive her more than a piece of august atrocity, or to leave a tacit understanding of her being naturally

amiable, I make bold to doubt. I think the eloquent authoress of the *Characteristics of Women* has tried rather too elaborately to prove her positive virtues by speculations which, to say the least, are not certain. She goes beyond Mrs. Siddons' toleration of the heroine; and getting absolutely in love with her, exclaims, 'What would not the firmness, the self-command, the ardent affections of this woman, have performed, if properly directed!' Why, her firmness and self-command are very evident; but as to her ardent affections, I would ask, on what other subject on earth she bestows them except the crown of Scotland? We are told, however, that her husband loves her, and, therefore, she could not be naturally bad. But in the first place, though we are not directly told so, we may be fairly allowed to imagine her a very beautiful woman; and with beauty and superior intellect, it is easy to conceive her managing and making herself necessary to Macbeth, a man comparatively weak and, as we see, facile to wickedness. There are instances of atrocious women having swayed the hearts of more amiable men.

"It seems to me, also, far from evident that Lady Macbeth is not naturally cruel, because she calls on all the demons of human thought to unsex her; or because she dies of what her apologists call remorse. If by that word we mean true contrition, Shakespeare gives no proof of her having shown such a feeling. Her death is mysterious, and we generally attribute it to despair and suicide. Even her terrible and thrice repeated sob of agony in the sleep-walking scene shows a conscience haunted indeed by terrors, but not penitent; for she still adheres to her godless old ground of comfort that 'Banquo is in his grave.' She is a splendid picture of evil, nevertheless—a sort of sister of Milton's Lucifer; and like him, we surely imagine her externally majestic and beautiful. Still I am persuaded that Shakespeare never meant her for anything better than a character of superb depravity, and a being with all her decorum and force of mind naturally cold and remorseless."<sup>1</sup>

The keynote of Lady Macbeth's character is, we think, unbounded ambition. Her master-passion is love, not for her husband, but for supreme power. It holds in subordination all other human sympathies and feelings. Having made the crown her sole aim of life in which alone she sees involved her own and her husband's perfect happiness, she worships it as the one true god with a devotion so ecstatic as to admit of no strange gods before it. After the portentous letter, she welcomes her husband, returning victorious from the wars,

1. T. Campbell's *Life of Mrs. Siddons*, II.

with no word of love or affection, but her face aglow and eyes aflame with royal hopes, she exclaims in eagerness:

. . . "Great Glamis! Worthy Cawdor!  
Greater than both, by the all-hail hereafter!"

Ambition has so roused her soul to enthusiasm that, heedless of her own feminine weakness, she insists in fearless intensity:

. . . "You shall put  
This night's great business into my despatch,  
Which shall to our nights and days to come  
Give solely sovereign sway and masterdom."

These telling words disclose that she aspires to royal power for self as well as for her husband. Wife-like, absorbed in his career, her queenly desire is to share as crowned consort in his prospective kingly power and glory. Her lofty aspiration may seem to obliterate the softer passions of her nature, but it only clouds them by its magnitude and intensity. Her ambition completely mastering her mind and heart enables her to dominate all other feelings and emotions and to subordinate all other passions to her yearning thirst for royalty. Her soliloquy on her husband's character discloses no female scorn, no absence of wifely or womanly respect, but an exceeding pride, which is betrayed rather than asserted in the manifest consciousness of her own mental superiority: and behind it all looms up an undoubted affection that is entwined with all the roots of his life. Love, without which her ambition would remain cold or indifferent, inflames the ruling passion of her nature to a more glowing intensity. Realizing that his royal ambition is one with her own, that her aspiration for the diadem is involved in his kingship, as an effect in its cause, she covets the crown for him with a feminine vehemence greater than his own. Both had long revelled in day-dreams of royalty, but now that Macbeth had voiced his ambitious project, now that preternatural predictions followed by opportunity seem to body forth their dreams into tangible form and give promise of success, she is determined

to hold him to his purpose. Her boundless confidence in his well tried courage bars all thought of fear or failure. Glorifying in his manly nature she delights and trusts in his valorous qualities. To him she thinks all greatness due, and deeming him the worthiest to rule she seeks to reward his merit with the throne. If her warrior-lord foresees and fears the dangerous consequences of the project, she in her exalted idea of his manly courage is ready to plunge fearlessly into the abyss of guilt in order to procure for "all *our* days and nights sovereign sway and masterdom."<sup>1</sup>

A striking quality of her feminine character is her lion-like courage. Whilst Macbeth's imagination alternately stimulates and enfeebles him, she, on the contrary, perceives things in their clearest outlines, and unhaltingly leaps from decision into action. The ardor of her unchecked ambition scorns every obstacle in its path. In its glow she resolutely overpowers all resistance, even her better nature, makes light of facing the dead, and summons the demons of hell to seal up her mind and heart against all dread of horror and remorse. Her surprising courage is, indeed, commensurate with her ambition; but it is the moral courage of a mind deluded by the charm of a lofty purpose, and of a will enchanted and blinded by the brilliancy of the prize. In her life of feminine seclusion she had through the passing years often nurtured enchanting aspirations of queenly dignities and honors, in dreams wherein the courage of fantasy was mistaken for the actual courage of bearing the realities of remorse. Hence, what in her hours of solitude she had in fancy imagined to be her life's ambition, that she was ready to pursue with fearless and unswerving energy, and accordingly in a supposititious courage that springs from the fiery enthusiasm of her lofty passion, she rallies her vacillating but more prudent husband with unwonted audacity, an audacity of fancy, which, when tested by actual circumstances, proves devoid of truthful reality. As a consequence, when with the deed accomplished and the "golden round" obtained, she perceives that, instead of successful greatness and imagined happiness, noth-

1. Cf. Gervinus, Shakespeare Commentaries, p 597.

ing but the ruin of the land and the destruction of her consort is the fruit of her crowned ambition, her fancied fortitude collapses into airy nothing, and leaves her in dismay a prey to guilty fears and remorse of conscience. This torture of conscience, engendered by harrowing imaginations, she might with her iron will have defied, if properly supported by her husband; but his further crimes and the prospect of his certain ruin, crush her hopes and leave her immersed in black despair. "Like an ivy, she had twined her fresh greenness round the kingly tree, when the trunk totters she falls to the ground, her iron heart dissolved in the fire of affliction."

The harmonious contrasts of character which Shakespeare portrays in his greatest dramas appear most prominent in the present tragedy. Macbeth is undoubtedly an eminently masculine character, gifted with physical courage and personal strength; and, nevertheless, his strong, masculine nature reveals qualities, which in remarkable contrast are eminently feminine, such as irritability of fancy and infirmity of resolution. Against these traits of the hero's character, the heroine in turn exhibits contrasts exactly the reverse. Her firmness of purpose grows in magnitude in proportion as Macbeth weakens and wavers in resolve; but her "undaunted mettle" is set in a "frame as exquisitely feminine as her husband's is magnificently manly. This was necessary in order to make her taunts of Macbeth's irresolution operate with the fullest intensity. Such sentiments upon the lips of what is called a masculine-looking or speaking woman have little moral force compared with what they derive from the ardent utterance of a delicately feminine voice and nature."<sup>1</sup>

Great as is her lion-like courage, it springs from an unconquerable will, and her strength of will is one of the most dominant notes in her character. In this she is the antithesis of her husband. If Macbeth be preëminently a practical man, molded in the world of action and caring little for the inner or intellectual life, she, on the other hand, is the embodiment of that same inner life and its intellectual culture. Shut out by her feminine lot from the activities of the

1. Cf. G. Fletcher, *Studies of Shakespeare*, p. 109.

external world, she had both the time and the inclination to devote her genius and her energies to the development of her mental faculties. Her soul, like her "little hand," unhardened by the work-a-day world, is quick, delicate, and sensitive. At home in mental struggles and accustomed to moral loneliness, she had, unillumined by the truths of revealed religion, settled for herself some of life's problems, as when in the crisis after Duncan's murder she exclaimed, "the sleeping and the dead are but as pictures." In her life of solitude the intellectual world was the sole kingdom of her personal experience, and within it her will was unquestioned king. Strengthened by mental discipline, it gave her perfect self-control and dominion over evil passions; and even now it proves true to her, when seduced by inordinate ambition, she, in spite of instincts of her nature, determines to battle for evil against good. This is seen in particular when thrilling all over with feminine repugnance to the bloody enterprise, which, nevertheless, her royal will insists upon her undertaking, she invokes "the spirits that tend on mortal thoughts to unsex her and fill her from crown to the toe with direst cruelty." Her career in the tragedy is a mental civil war between sinful ambition and the impulses of her better nature, a war in which her indomitable will, after conquering all resistance, in fine collapses, when, though crowned with the coveted diadem, but with hopes blighted and ambition blasted, she feels herself overwhelmed with misery. Such overstraining of mental forces could only end in madness.<sup>1</sup>

As Lady Macbeth's affection and concentration of mind give intensity to her ruling passion, so her splendid imagination arrays its object with unwonted radiance. Her towering ambition knows no hesitation nor vacillation and needs no encouragement nor spur. Hers is an ambition which alone suffices to absorb or obliterate all other feelings and to control and fix her imagination on the one prize in view; hers is an ambition that inspires a courage to contemn all obstacles to her husband's faltering purpose, an ambition without scruples, or doubts of success, or fear of consequences; and when

1. Cf. R. G. Moulton, *Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist*, C. VII.

the crown, once a possibility, now seems a certainty, she revels in sovereignty, luxuriates in dreams of power, reaches at the diadem that is to sear her brain, arrays it with an ideal glory, and in the full blaze of the sunlight of hope, eagle-like fixes unflinchingly her gaze upon it. With an enthusiasm as perfect and a faith as settled as that of the martyr who at the stake sees heaven and its crown of glory opening upon his gaze, she sees in royalty her heaven of existence, and imagines that, when clothed in regal robes and crowned with the "ornament of life," she shall also with "sovereign sway and masterdom" have attained to supreme good and happiness. Her ambition is nothing vulgar. Her grand and capacious mind is neither dazzled nor allured by the mere trappings of royalty. Hers is a thirst for supremacy and power. Hers is the sin of the apostate angel. She forfeits her heaven of the future for the grandest and loftiest prize of the present life, and the magnitude of her guilt almost overclouded by the magnitude of her courage, fails to excite our full abhorrence. Unlike a Goneril or a Regan, she is wicked solely to attain a great end; and only when the royal diadem of her ambition has dazzled her vision and blinded her moral sense, does she spurn all womanly feelings and scruples, and peril her life and soul for its attainment.<sup>1</sup>

Lady Macbeth's moral nature as portrayed in the drama, merits close consideration. A giantess in force of intellect and will, but in morals a pigmy, she was her own and her husband's ruin. After his resolve "to jump the life to come," her dominating will did not allow his fears, imaginings, and falterings to lose the prize for which he had bartered his eternal jewel. In extenuation of her guilt, Lady Martin says that, how horrid soever her crime may appear in the eyes of modern civilization, it no doubt seemed less enormous in her own day, when social life was more primitive and rude, and when civil strife was the common order. Succession in direct line was often broken on the theory that might was right. When a great stake was at play, moral susceptibility was not over-nice, and what we call murder often

1. Cf. Mrs. Jameson's *Characteristics of Women*.

passed in common estimation as an act of valor.<sup>1</sup> Such sentiments, founded on fiction rather than fact, may be prompted by goodness of heart or by natural fellow-feeling; but humane feelings were never the form according to which justice passes sentence upon murder, treachery, and treason. The moral law does not change according to man's state. Virtue is always virtue, and vice is always vice; for the natural law, because immutable, must at all times be the same moral guide of conscience. In this Shakespeare is unwaveringly true to nature. Hence, we find the sentiments of Lady Martin in contradiction to the drama itself. Therein, the Poet clearly shows that neither Lady Macbeth nor her husband held the view that might is right; and, moreover, by their well laid plot, and fears, and scruples, and consequent remorse, he proves that neither mistook a cold-blooded murder for an act of valor. On the contrary, nothing in the tragedy is exhibited more luminously than that, for the sake of a grand passion, Lady Macbeth knowingly devoted herself to evil, and steeled her heart to remorse of conscience, and in so doing deliberately and voluntarily rejected the moral law and defied its sanction.

It has been asked what would not religion have done with a character of such "superb depravity." It would have surely done for her what it does for the worst criminal, when opening his mind and heart to its redeeming and ennobling influence. Religion alone could have controlled her rebellious will and wild passion. Had hers been a genuine and practical religious faith, her mind would have been illumined by Christian principles, her will captivated by the beauty and dignity of a virtuous life, and, enamored of good and hating evil, she would have seen how virtue always brings its own reward, while in the path of vice always follows, as a shadow does its substance, a remorseless and avenging Nemesis. But unfortunately her nature was a soil barren of religion. Her fallow soul, unadorned by the fructifying seeds of Christian morals, was overrun with the noisome weeds of practical unbelief. Hence, she fell a prey to fatalism, that unnatural

1. Cf. Lady Martin, *Some of Shakespeare's Female Characters*, p. 232.

religion which gains supremacy over minds only after its principles have acquired a rank growth in hearts callous to Christian truths of revealed religion. Hence, her mind imbued with such principles, she glibly utters: "What is done is done"—"things without all remedy should be without regard"—and "the sleeping and the dead are but as pictures." "There is something hideous," says Dr. Campbell, "in the very strength of her mind that can dive down, like a wounded monster, to such low depths of consolation."

Under the influence of practical unbelief and an overmastering passion, Lady Macbeth made evil her good; yet after the murder her moral nature, though steeled against compunction, arose in rebellion, and disclosed that her lofty courage was only imaginary, and that her bravado was only the empty fiction of a self-deluded mind. Even before the murder, her moral nature was roused to repugnance. Her impiety and dominant passion could obscure, but not eradicate the clear and certain knowledge of primary principles of morals. The natural law, known by the light of reason, irradiates in the soul of every one by means of its first principles; hence all recognize, as laws binding by nature, a certain number of moral principles, which at all times have been universally accepted, and according to which reason distinguishing between good and evil, commends the one and forbids the other.<sup>1</sup>

Duncan's murder was in the eyes of Lady Macbeth a most heinous crime, from which instinctively her womanly nature shrank. When, however, she had yielded up her soul to evil ambition, she also opened the door to malignant spirits, who are ever watchful to fan the pernicious fires of passions that slumber in the hearts of their unwary victims. Her affinity for evil attracted them as kindred spirits and gave them glad welcome. "In the case of those," says St. Ignatius, "who are going from good to bad or from bad to worse, evil spirits touch the soul gently and sweetly like a drop of water entering into a sponge; the disposition of the

1. Philosophers maintain that no one having the full use of reason can be invincibly ignorant of the natural law in its most general principles and their obvious consequences drawn directly from them.

soul for evil engenders a strong affinity with fallen spirits and by reason of this harmonious relation they enter the soul, as in their own house quietly through the open door." When the horror of Lady Macbeth's projected crime had aroused a violent revulsion of feeling, her passionate ambition impelled her to stifle repugnance, to harden her heart, and to condemn all idea of remorse; but she still feared the weakness of her own womanly nature, and, in consequence, resolutely and impiously called upon her affinities, those sightless monsters of evil, "to stop up the access and passage to remorse," that no compunctious visitings of nature might shake her fell purpose." In surrendering her soul, aflame with ambition to the influence of her demoniacal affinities, she forfeited the grace of heaven, and in her impiety was abandoned to the guidance of the demons she had invoked. The effect is immediate. Her nature is transformed to evil, alike to that of her affinities: she revels in passionate ambition and gloats over the murderous project; feels inspired with a preternatural strength and enthusiasm that shame her husband's falterings; sneers at his fears and scruples as womanly weaknesses unbecoming a man; re-enchants his waning purpose and reawakens his halting courage by reasoning cold and passionless; and after the murder urges him to stifle conscience and remorse, to condemn fears of consequences, and to meet suspicion with a bold front. How easy it all is: "A little water clears us of this deed."

A tendency to the blackest crime and a strong susceptibility to moral emotions, are not incompatible traits of character. In every human heart one passion or another attempts to establish its empire. If nurtured and indulged, it waxes strong in rebellion against restraint and the laws of morals, until, like a roaring tempest overwhelming its victim and drowning the voice of conscience, it rushes madly into lawless action. But after the crime comes reaction. In Lady Macbeth is aroused a moral detestation and horror, which, through watchful days and sleepless nights, tortured her with mental agony and drove her ultimately to despair, to insanity, and to suicide. Such reaction is a clear proof

that hers was a moral nature which, though long dormant, was, nevertheless, when awakened keenly responsive to a sense of guilt, to remorse, and to the stings of conscience. "Jussisti, Domine, et ita est ut poena sua sibi sit omnis inordinatus animus."<sup>1</sup>

Before the crime, the fires of her glowing passion had blinded her to the Nemesis that was sure to pursue her through remorseful days, and fill her dreams with "visions of the old man's blood, trickling down before her eyes." Her fear and terror of future judgment, which racked her soul by day are, perhaps, revealed in sleep in the words, "Hell is murky," and in her heart-piercing sobs of despair. Hers is a remorse without repentance or any reference to an offended Deity. Arising from the torture of self-condemnation, from the pangs of a wounded conscience, and the violated feelings of her nature, her remorse is as fatal as her resolve, as terrible as her crime, as strong as her soul, and as deep as her guilt.<sup>2</sup> "In the terribly swift succession of punishment to her crimes, lies one of the master-traits of skill by which Shakespeare contrives to make us blend an awful feeling, somewhat akin to pity, with our satisfaction at her death. She dies, she is swept away darkly from before us to her great account. We do not exult over her fate; to see a fellow-creature, a beautiful woman, with a bright, bold intellect, thus summoned to her destiny, creates a religious feeling too profound for exultation."<sup>3</sup>

1. The Lord has decreed, and so it is that every disordered soul is unto self its own punishment.—Confess. St. Aug., cap. XII.

2. Cf. Mrs. Jameson, *Characteristics of Women in Shakespeare*, II, p. 320.

3. T. Campbell, *Life of Mrs. Siddons*, II

## CHAPTER XI

### THE MORAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TRAGEDY

As art teaches moral truths only indirectly, so Shakespeare, as a dramatic artist, inculcates morality, not as a moral philosopher by express precepts, but by living impulses, by illustration, and example. This touching of the heart teaches us better than the cold language of precept to feel delight in the right and disgust at the wrong, and to develop within us that true spirit of self-love which impels us to make the good and the beautiful our own. To the Poet, evil was always deformity, and virtue beauty. Because his poetic impulse is inseparably interwoven with his ethical feelings, he took life as a whole, in which the moral, the aesthetic, and the intellectual qualities are severed by no speculative analysis. Hence, he affirms: "The web of our life is a mingled yarn, good and ill together; our virtues would be proud if our faults whipped them not; and our crimes would despair if they were not cherished by our virtues."<sup>1</sup>

In Shakespeare, says Cardinal Newman, "there is neither contempt of religion nor scepticism, and he upholds the broad laws of moral and divine truths with the consistency and severity of an Aeschylus, Sophocles, or Pindar. There is no mistaking in his works on which side lies the right; Satan is not made a hero, nor Cain a victim, but pride is pride, and vice is vice, and whatever indulgence he may allow himself in light thoughts or unseemly words, yet his admiration is reserved for sanctity and truth."<sup>2</sup> Beyond all other poets, he inculcated the moral truth that a Christian's life calls for the taming of the passions. His deep insight into human

1. *All's Well That Ends Well*, IV, iii.

2. Card. Newman, *Catholic Literature in Its Relation to Classical Literature*.

nature safeguarded him against the too common error of our times that the mere knowledge of good and evil is in itself a sufficient guard against the temptations of life. He knew that where one man regulates his conduct by precept and example, there are thousands who follow the line of least resistance, all regardless of moral obligations. One good impulse is more productive of virtue than a hundred good precepts; "one thorn of experience is worth more than a whole wilderness of warnings." Though Shakespeare's dramas uphold the natural rights of the heart as well as moral freedom, they inculcate moderation and discipline against the common enemy of man—excess of the passions. His is not the folly of the modern dramatist, who pictures human impulses or weaknesses in such attractive colors as to captivate the mind and heart, and lead them into the paths of moral turpitude. On the contrary, he believed, it seems, in Aristotle's dictum, that the main purpose of tragedy is to purify the passions, and, in consequence, he idealizes our human weaknesses in grander characters, in order that in their more awful results we may the better see how evil actions react upon us, and lead to the catastrophe of our lives. They awaken the spectator to an intimate and sensitive realization of the beginning of the false way, that he may, in alertness, walk more circumspectly through the drama of his own life.<sup>1</sup>

In view of their moral force, the tragedies of Shakespeare have been called the "Grand Mystery Plays of Humanity." Mystery Plays were dramas of medieval faith and genius. Their object was primarily to set forth by illustrations of the prophetic history of the Old Testament, and more particularly of the fulfillment by the New, the central mystery of the Redemption of the world as accomplished by the Nativity, the Passion, and the Resurrection of the Savior. By disclosing the interior union of the visible with the invisible, of the temporal with the eternal, and of the human with the divine, they purposed to reveal the Providence of God, who is ever present in the world of His creation, directing and ruling

1. Cf. James Russell Lowell, *Literary Criticism*.

human affairs. The Mystery was no sudden form of play sprung into existence; it was based upon an historic tradition of rare interest, involving centuries of social progress. To her congregations to whom the Bible was a sealed book, since they could not read, the Church presented Scriptural panoramas, which told the story of the Savior's life and resurrection. The part these plays occupied in the Church's service is in many cases indicated at the beginning of the manuscripts. The directions of one state that on the second night of the birth of our Lord, after the *Te Deum* is sung, the Play of the Shepherds shall begin, followed by the Mass; the direction on another, that of the *Epiphany*, reads: "After the third response, three priests of high rank, representing the Magi, shall come to the Altar, and after the Play the service shall begin."

From France and Germany, the Mystery and Miracle Plays passed into England. The earliest known was the "Ludus de S. Katharina," played at Dunstable in the twelfth century. It was presented by the pupils of Geoffrey, Abbott of St. Albans. In the time of Chaucer, the Mystery Play with its pageant in the open was already well established. The Mysteries of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were fostered by the guilds of England. Each guild had a patron saint whose day was observed, and, as time went on, rivalry grew as to the superior merit of the presentations, resulting in pageants of wonderful ambitions. The whole sweep of the Bible was not too much for representation, even though it took many days. The popularity and gigantic proportions which the Mystery Plays had attained arose from the Faith of the masses who, penetrated with Christian beliefs and ideas, had come to love them, and to see in them the manifestations of Divine Providence at once merciful and just. They pictured the whole history of the human race, and gave to that representation all the development demanded by the religious conscience and the ethics of the nations then united in the one Faith of Christendom. Their portrayal of sin and the fall of the first man, exposed the real meaning of the justice and pardon of Calvary; and the impressive

spectacle of the universal judgment solved the mystery which envelopes the tragedy of human destinies. If we be inclined to blame the literary taste of our good ancestors, let us remember that it was remarkable for their times, when their language and literature was still in the process of formation. Their philosophy was, however, admirable. It established on an immovable basis the fundamental laws of our dramatic art, and from its literary infancy, as from a germ, has developed the strength and the character of manhood as seen in the greater dramas of Shakespeare.<sup>1</sup>

Out of the Mystery and Miracle Plays sprang a third class called the Moralities. They were more perfect in dramatic form, and consisted of allegorical personifications of the virtues and vices, which were introduced as *dramatis personae*. These religious dramas, which still flourished during the reign of Elizabeth, and the modern drama as Shakespeare created it, were two streams running side by side. We have continuous evidence of their popularity and frequent production in nearly every part of England during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Records which survive show their performance in at least thirty English towns and villages. Shakespeare no doubt took part in the Moral Interludes which were enacted in praise of learning at the advanced school which he attended at Stratford-on-Avon. The York Miracle Plays were last enacted when the Poet had attained his majority; and ten years later, when he had begun his career as dramatist, the Newcastle Plays were yet in vogue. The Chester Plays were still presented in 1600, and the Beverly till 1604, when Shakespeare's work was already drawing to a close. The Miracle Plays dying with the death of Elizabeth, had overlapped the noblest period of the English drama; and the reminiscence of *the Harrowing of Hell* in the Porter's speech in *Macbeth*, is perhaps the most noticeable trace which they have left on the drama of the Shakespearean age. Having fostered a love of acting in every county of England, the Miracle and Morality Plays

1. Cf. A. Cabour, S. J., *Dramatic Mysteries of 15th & 16th Centuries*. Catholic World, Vol. I.

had prepared the ground from which the Shakespearean harvest was to spring in all its glorious abundance.<sup>1</sup>

All the elements of power and art present in the Mystery, Morality, and Interlude, Shakespeare unfolded in his tragedies, and harmonized them in the spirit of freedom, and with the feeling for beauty which he inherited from the Renaissance. His tragedies took on a new and deeper form from an invisible background against which human life is set, and from the moral order, which man cannot violate without calling tragic forces into action. His is a clear perception of the Christian view of man's place and meaning in the world in which is exhibited human personality as largely shaping its own destiny; for he makes man solve the problem of existence, not in the action of his mind alone, but by all the resources of his complex nature, his appetites and emotions, his instincts and passions, and his thought and will. This action reveals man to himself and to his fellowmen, evokes his powers, develops his personality, and, by giving free play to his human spirit, makes him conscious of his moral significance, and invests him with immortal hopes. This notion of man's character is the key to the Poet's conception of human life; for apparently the problem of life in the Shakespearean tragedy, is to create in the civil or social order a harmony between man's individual will and the eternal and immutable principles of the higher moral law.

In tragic characters this harmony is disturbed and broken; self-love, swollen to egotism under the impulse of unbridled passions, hurries them to an unhappy end. Such characters tragedy depicts—men who in defiance of the powers of heaven, rely upon exaggerated human strength, and in the blindness of fearful passions brave every human and divine law. Their unbounded pretensions, being incompatible with the rights of individuals and of society, cause a natural reaction in which they suffer wreck and submersion. Such ignoring of the moral law must precipitate a series of tragic events, either when individual passion is set in opposition to the welfare

1. Cf. Alfred W. Pollard, *English Miracle Plays, Moralities and Interludes*, Introduction, *passim*.—Henry J. Montrose, "Every Man."

of the family, as in *Lear* and in *Romeo and Juliet*, or when individual will is set in opposition to the State, as in *Coriolanus*, *Julius Caesar*, and *Macbeth*. In the latter the State is pictured as striving after harmony, and a conflict is inevitable, and this conflict, not fanciful nor accidental, but an actual working out, under tragic forms, of the moral and social order, ultimately results in a deeper harmony. The Poet's clear representation of this process of reconciliation has stamped his tragedies as high moral works of art. "For true art is the illumination of experience, and in *Macbeth* the ultimate truths of life and the deepest secrets of experience are organized into forces of the highest beauty, wherein are revealed spiritual impulses and hidden aspirations of the human heart."<sup>1</sup>

The drama portrays *Macbeth* as the slave of his ruling passion, and wholly engrossed in selfish interests. By their very nature, they make him a solitary at war with the people and the nobles of the realm. His usurpation and continuous course in crime, not only overwhelm the whole State with misery, but also invite further devastation and ruin by the hostile forces of the neighboring kingdom. Thus is impressed upon us the solemn truth that crime in its evil influence, like a fire growing into a great conflagration, spreads its baneful effects far and wide. Accordingly, the moral of the action exhibits a dual element: the one arising from a necessary and rapidly increasing estrangement of the usurper from God and his fellowmen; and the other from his crimes, which by their fearful acceleration rush him on to inevitable destruction. Evil is always its own avenger, but there are times when its growth is so rank and its roots so deeply set that nothing can eradicate it, save the superhuman power of an all-ruling Providence. This truth is embodied in the person of St. Edward (1004-1066), the holy king of England, who by his miraculous touch diffuses the blessing of health, and who is here called in to rescue a Christian people from tyranny and ruin. Unwilling in his spirit of humanity to

1. Cf. Hamilton W. Mabie, *Shakespeare, Poet, Dramatist, and Man*, C. XV. *passim*.

wield the sword of vengeance himself, he delegates his power to the pious and magnanimous Siward, who with the aid of Scottish nobles, crushes the bloody monster, and restores order and justice to a long suffering country. Thus, in the destructive consequences of evil which the Poet pictures, one may, says Ulrici,<sup>1</sup> glean the thought of comfort and instruction that victory is ultimately ever with the virtuous, that the deadly power of evil is blasted and uprooted by the love and justice of God, and good is at last enthroned as the conqueror of the world.

In the tragedy of Macbeth and the Mystery Play of *Man's Fall in Eden*, appear striking parallels. In both the situation is essentially the same, and the same are the natural and preternatural agencies. In both, is the same temptation to ambition—"You shall be as gods," and "All hail, Macbeth, that shall be king hereafter." In both, there is the same violation of a divine command: "Thou shalt not eat"—"thou shalt not kill," and the same tempter seeking to defeat the will of the Almighty. In the one, the fallen angel assumes the guise of the wily serpent, and in the other, evil spirits clothe themselves in the visible forms of the Weird Sisters. In both, the lying tempter gives delusive assurances that "keep the word of promise to the ear and break it to the hope"; in the one, "Ye shall not surely die," and in the other, "none of woman born shall harm Macbeth." In both, the husband and the wife are the transgressors, and of the two, the woman is the more daring, the accomplice, and the instigator of the crime.<sup>2</sup>

In every tragedy of Shakespeare is portrayed a more or less noble character under the degenerating influence of some ruling passion. Othello is the type of jealousy, Coriolanus of pride, and Macbeth of ambition. In all a master-passion is the one central theme. By depicting it in strong colors with all the shadows of real life, the Poet deduces a moral lesson as luminous and universal as the light of day. His portrayal of the gradual transformation of his hero's char-

1. Shakespeare's Dramatische Kunst.

2. Cf. Kirke, Atlantic Monthly, April, 1895.

acter for evil, presents no less a psychological than a dramatic interest. Awe-inspiring is the picture, unrelieved by softer hues which might distract from the contemplation of a moral shipwreck, as revealed in the temptation, surrender, and ruin of a soul. Macbeth first comes before us a loyal nobleman, a warrior, valiant and renowned, whose antecedents give assurance of a roseate future full of worth and honor. Before our eyes, however, he gradually grows into a bloody tyrant whose cruelty knows no pity, and sin having deadened conscience and wrecked his moral nature, he recklessly defies all the dangers of the present and all the terrors of the future life. His crimes have, nevertheless, separated him from God and man in a hopeless isolation, made more miserable by the prospect of losing the prize for which he sacrificed his "eternal jewel to the common enemy of man." They overwhelm him with remorse, which ever driving him on in delirium from crime to crime, drags him onward to his wretched doom; a remorse that, knowing no repentance nor hope of alleviation can only end in despair.

No other tragedy of Shakespeare portrays the ethical element with such single-mindedness and power, nor do the annals of mankind, either sacred or profane, furnish an example which so clearly pictures Satanic temptation and so forcibly illustrates the baneful ravages of a ruling passion, when once rooted for evil in the human heart. Hence *Macbeth* not only challenges our consideration as a high literary work of art, but also arouses our interest and enchains our attention by reason of its practical moral significance, so true to nature, so pertinent to every individual, and so universal in its application. Many have been the Macbeths of history—men, who in the selfish interest of their egotism, have in defiance of the rights of their fellowmen and of the moral law of God, brought ruin and desolation upon a once smiling land. Others again in multitudes, though playing upon a more sequestered stage of life, have fallen victims to some ruling passion, and bartered an eternal for a temporal crown. Ignoring the sublime destiny of man and the fleetingness of human life, they devoted all the energies of their brief exist-

ence to the worship of some false god, all forgetful of the fact that such transient objects cannot satisfy an immortal soul in its innate yearnings for imperishable and eternal good. "The thorns they reaped were of the tree they planted."

After a careful study of Shakespeare's dramas no one can doubt that he excels as a moralist. Certain passages may be of questionable taste, but his works taken as a whole, and especially his tragedies, cannot fail to elevate the mind by the purity of the morals they inculcate. Through them breathes so strong a belief in virtue, so steady an adherence to good principles united with such a vigorous tone of honor as testifies to the author's excellence as a moralist, nay as a Christian. This commendable quality is indeed so prominent as to be noted even by foreign commentators. Among the German critics, Gervinus writes: "The high moral spirit which in Shakespeare's plays controls the complications of fate and the issues of human actions, indicates the eternal and incorruptible justice in human things—the finger of God, which our dull eyes do not perceive in reality." This view is re-echoed by several critics across the Rhine. De Lamartine says: "If his dramas are criminal in their issues, their logic is invariably and inexorably orthodox. In *Macbeth* we see above all the immediate expiation of crime by the secret vengeance of God. Herein lies the invincible morality of Shakespeare: the Poet is in harmony with God." His voice he recognizes in the dictates of conscience, which speaking in every man through the ages, commends good and reprobates evil. Though his tragic characters are taken from peoples greatly differing and separated by long periods of time, all are made to exemplify the same moral truths. Centuries may follow centuries; civilization may ebb and flow; men's opinions and creeds may change; kingdoms may rise and fall; and peoples may flourish or sink in decay; yet through all and surviving all, Shakespeare recognizes the same moral law; for undying and unchangeable, "it is written on the tablets of eternity." Puny man may ignore it or rebel against it, and in folly think to thrive by injustice, or falsehood, or cruelty, or lust, or pride; but soon his vices become

the scorpion lashes with which avenging Nemesis drives him to his doom. Across the pages of his tragedies is written in glaring letters the prophetic warning: "The wages of sin is death."

## ACT FIRST

### SCENE FIRST

#### A PREMONITION

Condensing within brief limits the action of eighteen years, the drama strides along with amazing rapidity. In the very first scene, the spectral chant of the Weird Sisters in a wild desert place, prepares the mind for all that is to follow in a drama which is to run on under diabolical control. The curtain rises upon a thunder-storm in the dead of night. Its preternatural suddenness, as well as its physical blackness, which is intermittently illumined by lurid flashes, fittingly forebode the moral gloom of the drama. A few moments pass and three horrid creatures glide in noiselessly as ghosts from a thundercloud. Unlike the common old hag witches of tradition, they are Shakespeare's own peculiar creation, preternatural beings, visible forms of evil spirits; and their sudden entrance from the blackness of the tempest aptly indicates their affinity with the wild and destructive elements of nature. These repulsive, unearthly creatures, speaking a peculiar language full of rhythmic sounds, which forms the weird music of their dismal dance, reveal their diabolical hopes in regard to Macbeth, and gloat over their reversal of man's moral code, "fair is foul and foul is fair." At the warning of familiar spirits, sentries of the night, whose voice they recognize in the mew of cat and croak of frog, they circle round and round, delirious in joy over their evil purpose, and quickly vanish in the blackness of the stormy night.

### SCENE SECOND

#### NEWS OF BATTLE

The King and attendants are encamped at Forres. We learn from a wounded captain, straggling homeward from the

battle, of Macbeth's double victory in one day, the one over Macdonwald's rebel forces, and the other over the invading army of Sweno, Norway's king, in league with the thane of Cawdor. The latter, the king condemns as a traitor, and creating Macbeth thane of Cawdor, commissions Ross to go and greet the returning warrior with the title. Duncan appears in strong contrast with Macbeth. Though characterized by amiability and gentleness and by a vivid sense of affection and gratitude, his is a greater weakness than becomes a king. Though bravery was in those stormy days the highest requisite for a monarch, he was lacking in the greatly needed qualities of a warrior. His known aversion to war, as well as his incapacity to lead an army, gave free rein to strife among his more ambitious nobles, and in consequence, treason multiplied under his rule. Furthermore, while his crown was in danger from the rebel army of Macdonwald, and the kingdom was struggling for existence with the invading forces of Norway's warrior king, he was satisfied to tarry tamely in camp, instead of encouraging, at least by his presence, the loyal soldiers who were bravely battling in defense of his crown. In contrast with Duncan's weakness, the valor of Macbeth shines more brilliantly. His personal courage, his undaunted valor, his prowess at arms, his resources in war, and his repeated victories won for him such unequalled military prestige that his troopers named him "valor's minion," or favorite, and "Bellona's bridegroom." The whole scene is likely to suggest the thought that the amiable and gentle king, though adorned with many virtues, was, from lack of more rugged qualities, unfit for his high position in those days of strife, while his cousin, Macbeth, eminently possessed the qualifications demanded of a monarch at a time when only warriors were kings.

### SCENE THIRD

#### IN AMBUSH

Upon a blasted heath near Forres, the Weird Sisters are anxiously awaiting the passing of Macbeth. "There is not,"

says Knight, "a more dreary piece of moorland to be found in all Scotland. It is without tree or shrub. A few patches of oats are visible here and there, and the eye reposes on a fir plantation at one extremity; but all around is black and brown, made up of peat and bog water, white stones and brushes of furze. The desolation of the scene in stormy weather, or when the twilight fogs are trailing over the pathless heath or settling down upon the pools, must remain indescribable." The scene harmonizes with the evil nature of the Weird Sisters. It reveals the malignity of their character as in horrid ceremonies of incantation, they gloat maliciously over their past and future evil deeds. The Poet expresses in the person of these repulsive and abnormal creatures the terrible ravages which evil works upon the human soul. Sin is a moral evil, which, by blighting the mind and blasting the heart to all that is good and beautiful, destroys every trait of nobility and refinement of character. Furthermore, the malign influence that wicked persons may exercise upon the good is exhibited by the rehearsal of the evil which these anomalous creatures have done upon human beings. The beat of drum announces the near approach of Macbeth. In sudden excitement, the Weird Sisters, full of glee, wind up the charm that is to allure their approaching victim. At once closing their Satanic ritual by joining hands and chanting, they invoke the magical power of the mystical number and circle around, three rounds for each, and then exclaim, "Peace! the charm's wound up" (ll. 1-37).

Of Macbeth's entrance upon the scene, Campbell says: "When the drum of the Scotch army is heard on the wild heath, and when I fancy it advancing with its bowmen in front and its spears and banners in the distance, I am always disappointed with Macbeth's entrance at the head of a few kilted actors. I strongly suspect that the appearance of the Weird Sisters is too wild and poetical for the possibility of its ever being duly enacted in a theater. I think it defies theatrical art to render it half so welcome as when we read it by the mere light of our own imagination." Their presentation on the modern stage is certainly incongruous if not

ridiculous. Managers too often influenced by reason of economy or convenience rather than of art, are satisfied to give the Weird Sisters and the witches of Middleton, which follow later, the same impersonation. Such treatment of characters that are most distinctly different is undoubtedly inharmonious with the Poet's design. The text shows that he wished to present in visible concrete form an illustration of the belief widely prevalent in his time that demons, as embodied spirits of wickedness intent on alluring man to evil, are permitted to infest the earth. Only on such a supposition can be verified the common opinion of Shakespearean critics that in the presentation of the Weird Sisters the Poet departs from the traditional witches of superstition, and gives us a new creation uniquely his own. That such was his purpose is clear from the delineation of their nature, character, and appearance, as described by Banquo. They suddenly bubble up before his astonished eyes—ghostlike from airy nothing—appearing in female garb, but with men's bearded faces, abnormal, monstrous beings, crooked, misshapen, withered, haggard, repulsively uncanny, and, in short, anomalies, deviating from the essential characteristics of the known human type. In their horrid and unearthly forms, so "unlike the inhabitants of earth," they amaze and overawe both Macbeth and Banquo. The latter doubts their reality, and mistrusting his senses, questions in bewilderment whether they are actually living beings, as outwardly they seem, or only forms phantasmal. When they vanish from his gaze, like some corporeal thing that suddenly dissolves itself into invisible air, he further questions the veracity of his senses and the saneness of his mind. Their nature and characteristics, as preternatural evil beings who purpose Macbeth's moral ruin appear beyond doubt in the progress of the drama.

Macbeth flushed with victory and returning at the head of his clans, feels depressed in spirits from the gloomy foulness of the weather. Communing in silence with himself, his mind is agitated by conflicting thoughts: there is the inactivity and weakness of the aged Duncan in contrast with his

own energy and valor in the field of action; there is the king's manifest incapacity to rule and to preserve the realm in peace, an incapacity which throws upon himself the burden of the wars in defense of the crown; there are the nobles, who condemn the unchivalric inaction of Duncan, and recognize his own warlike valor and influence over the chiefs and clans of the nation; now that he is returning victorious and acclaimed the national hero, who has saved the kingdom from the destruction which was threatened by domestic and foreign strifes, why not be *de jure* king, as well as *de facto*? His right to the crown equals that of his cousin, Duncan. Why not take the scepter in his own hand, to maintain the peace in his distracted country, and to strike terror into the foreign foes of Scotland? Heated in mind by these ambitious thoughts, Macbeth is awakened from his musings by startling notions suggestive of the means of their attainment, and in perturbed spirits exclaims, "So foul and fair a day I have not seen." A day so fair in glorious achievements and yet so foul at its close—so foul in lustful thoughts of lawless ambition secretly indulged. His words—the echo of the last words of the Weird Sisters—"fair is foul and foul is fair"—indicate that, though he be not yet in alliance with the powers of evil, there is, by means of his master passion, an unconscious relationship already established between his soul and the malignant spirits of temptation. Banquo first notices the presence of the Weird Sisters, and in surprise at their wild, withered and abnormal appearance, questions their real nature, whether of earth or air, and whether man may address them (ll. 38-47).

Indifferent to Banquo's questions, each of the Weird Sisters places her choppy fingers on her skinny lips, to signify the wish for him to remain silent. They have no concern with him. Hereupon, Macbeth in impatient and imperious tones commands them to reply. Instantly they give him attention. He and not Banquo is their special quarry. His wayward passion has created in his heart an affinity for evil, which attracts these powers of darkness, and arms them with malign influence over him. They have been lying in ambush, as a

previous scene discloses, awaiting the opportune moment to surprise him in the summer of his glory. His mad passion of ambition, they have discovered in the secret thoughts and wicked desires of his heart, and hope to stimulate them to regicide and moral ruin. Wherefore, they shall attempt to cheat him, to entrap him by wiles, and, by fatal equivocations, to lead him to believe that the kingship of his ambition is the decree, the work of fate, whereas it must be the fruit of his own bloody deed. In addressing Macbeth, they drop all the vulgarity of the previous scene, assume a dignity and an elevated tone, as become spirits that are endowed with preternatural powers and foreknowledge of events. Like oracles of old, they voice their prophecies in terms brief and obscure, but with a majestic solemnity that inspires their auditors with preternatural awe:

MACBETH. Speak, if you can: what are you?

1 WITCH. All hail, Macbeth! Hail to thee, thane of Glamis!

2 WITCH. All hail, Macbeth! Hail to thee, thane of Cawdor!

3 WITCH. All hail, Macbeth, that shalt be king hereafter!

### IMPERFECT SPEAKERS

The predictions of the Weird Sisters startle Macbeth, and throw him into such manifest excitement that Banquo, in surprise, questions why he should "fear things that sound so fair." Wrapt in silence and brooding over the predictions, Macbeth feels himself transported with guilty thoughts and imaginations. The Weird Sisters have struck the master chord of his heart and find it vibrates at their touch. Their strange knowledge of his evil dreams and secret aspirations awakens him to doubts and fears. Unsummoned, they have come from the spirit world as shadowy ministers of fate, and, in harmony with his own thoughts and desires, seem to be willing accomplices in the attainment of his lawless ambition. While the words of the Weird Sisters stir Macbeth to great excitement, they leave Banquo unaffected, save by a natural curiosity. This is due to their different relations to the wicked tempters; unlike Macbeth, Banquo's soul is

not harrowed by an evil passion that places him in agreement with evil spirits, and in consequence, their words touch no responsive chord in his heart. Hence, though in surprise he gazes in simple wonderment at their strange appearance, and in roused attention, listens to their mysterious words, he perceives in them no forebodings of evil; for Macbeth's succession to the throne seemed far from improbable in those warlike times, when the aged Duncan might naturally, by approved custom, choose for successor his cousin, a well tried warrior and national favorite, rather than the boy Malcolm. Banquo still doubtful of the reality of the Weird Sisters, and of their prophetic powers, questions them further. Though they have greeted Macbeth "with present grace"—the thane of Cawdor; and with "royal hope"—the future kingship, he, while neither begging their favor nor fearing their hate, skeptically challenges them to read his horoscope of destiny.

Lost in silence, while musing over the welcomed prophecies, Macbeth suddenly regained his voice, when he observed the Weird Sisters about to depart. In pondering over the predictions, he foresaw obstacles to their fulfilment, and, in consequence, anxiously attempted to stay the departing visitors. In tones full of impatience and excitement, he imperiously commands them—"imperfect speakers," to solve his doubts by further information. Heedless of his words, the Weird Sisters instantly "melted as breath into the air," and left him surprised and dazed gazing in wonderment into vacant space.

The astuteness of these tempting spirits and their long experience with mankind enable them to conjecture with moral certainty that their chosen victim will solve his doubts in the manner they intend. His insistence that the spirits stay and tell him more, without examining their nature, their purpose, and their truthfulness, shows his readiness to believe promises that harmonize with his desires. His acceptance of their prophecies and his anxiety and sore distress at failure to learn more, indicate that he is already strongly under their pernicious spell. Having marked him for their own, they

have studied his character,<sup>1</sup> his good and bad qualities, and his natural dispositions, and among them have discerned a lofty ambition, which rules his heart and predominates all other feelings. In acuteness of intellect, they perceive that for the attainment of the grand prize after which he secretly aspires, he will in all probability barter fortune, honor, virtue, in this life, and even his eternal weal in the next. The fire of his absorbing passion now enkindled, they withdraw to watch in secret its steady progress, to fan its flames ever and anon with pernicious winds, until, culminating in a direful conflagration, it shall strew destruction in its path, and leave him exposed, the charred moral ruin of his former nobler self.

Macbeth and Banquo stood dazed and somewhat frightened at the sudden disappearance of the Weird Sisters. The mysterious melting away of corporeal beings before their very eyes, forced upon them the truth of the real nature of their incorporeal visitors. In vain Banquo in awe and wonder gazed searchingly about him; they had disappeared as quickly as bubbles which rise from the deep to the water's surface only to break and vanish into nothingness. Fearful lest some ocular illusion may have taken his reason captive, he is inclined to doubt the veracity of his senses. Macbeth, on the contrary, indifferent as to the nature of the Weird Sisters, firmly believes their words. His concern and regret that they had not stayed for further parley clearly mark how, under their evil spell, the poisoned leaven is already working in his mind and heart. Wholly absorbed and inflamed by their prophecies, he in joy repeats them approvingly, and for the first time manifests a tinge of jealousy of Banquo; the latter, however, still skeptically inclined, expresses his indifference in slighting words and tones (ll. 51-89).

### CAN THE DEVIL SPEAK TRUE?

That Macbeth tempted the evil spirits to tempt him, and that they in turn stimulated and inflamed thoughts and

1. Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, Rule XIV for Discernment of Spirits, Second Treatise.

desires, which originated in his own mind under the impulse of his ruling passion, is evident up to this point; and the evidence is further strengthened with the arrival of the royal couriers in the latter part of the present scene. Ross and Angus greet Macbeth in the king's name and, by way of preamble, relate Duncan's praise of the warrior's personal combat with the traitor Macdonwald, as well as of his wondrous victories. In bestowing only the petty thanedom of Cawdor, as a reward for his brilliant service, Duncan is conscious of ingratitude, and in consequence, expresses a wish to maintain a proportion both of thanks and payment. Hence, he speaks of a "greater honor," of which the thaneship of Cawdor is but "an earnest," or pledge, and this "greater honor" can be nothing less than the crown itself. In this mood, say they, Duncan's "wonders and his praises do contend which (dignity) should be thine or his." Having hinted at such abdication, the king prudently checks himself, "silenced with that."<sup>1</sup>

The preamble ended, the couriers announce their royal commission; and Ross, speaking formally in the name of the king, hails Macbeth thane of Cawdor. This unexpected verification of the Weird Sisters' prophecy astounds both Macbeth and Banquo. The latter self-musing, expresses surprise that the "father of lies" can speak the truth. In this, however, he was deceived; for the prediction both of the thane of Glamis and of Cawdor were only seeming prophecies. The death of Sinel, the father of Macbeth, had occurred after his son's departure for the distant field of action; hence, the son had not yet entered into possession of his father's domain, nor assumed the title, which was his by natural right of inheritance. Furthermore, the evil spirits who had planned Macbeth's moral ruin, were aware, as Macbeth was not, that he had already been created thane of Cawdor, and that royal messengers were en route to greet him with the title; hence, the Weird Sisters intercepting the returning warrior, before the arrival of the king's couriers, could in truth salute him,

1. Concerning these difficult and much-disputed lines, cf. Sprague, apud Furness, p. 47, Fourth Edition.

“hail to thee, thane of Cawdor.” Thus was the cunning design of these evil spirits crowned with success; for when Macbeth saw that their predictions were fulfilled in the thaneship of Glamis and of Cawdor, he felt assured that their other prophetic salutation, “All hail, Macbeth, that shalt be king hereafter,” would likewise be verified.

Banquo’s incredulity regarding the truthfulness of the Weird Sisters, even after the verification of their first and second prediction, brings into greater prominence Macbeth’s absolute credulity. The latter’s thoughts in reverie quickly run from the thane of Glamis and of Cawdor to the “golden round” of his ambition. With glad feelings of assured hopes, he exclaims in tones full of confidence, “the greatest is behind.” Surprised, however, at Banquo’s indifference to the promise of the Weird Sisters, he wonders and questions him in impassioned words, which reveal his own undoubted faith: “Do you not hope your children shall be kings?” But Banquo, proof against the wiles of the tempters, cautions him lest the thaneship of Cawdor may enkindle in his soul unholy hopes for the crown. Furthermore, he expresses suspicion that spirits of darkness are seeking to beguile and ensnare him. His words are prompted by a strong moral rectitude, which enables him to comprehend the nature of the Weird Sisters and to penetrate their artifice. In the present instance, as well as on other occasions, the Poet manifestly designs Banquo to stand as a good angel between Macbeth and his evil tempters, and as a counter-agent to guard him against their deceits, and to strengthen his moral weakness of will against their covert design.

Banquo’s words indicate his Christian belief in truths of divine revelation, which teaches the existence of good and evil spirits, and their relation to mankind. He believes that lying spirits of darkness, in their efforts to estrange men from the Creator, sometimes assume the form of an angel of light, in order to deceive and “win us to our harm.” “It is peculiar to evil spirits to enter a soul in the guise of innocence and then to come out wearing their own colors.” That is, they begin by suggesting thoughts in conformity with the

dispositions of the person tempted, and then gradually endeavor to involve him in their secret snares, and to instil perverse intentions, seeking thereby to gain their own wicked ends. If the thoughts suggested by the tempter have a bad termination, or if they tend to evil or to a lesser good, or disturb and disquiet the soul, it is a clear sign that they proceed from the bad angel, the enemy of our salvation. Such are but a few of the principles laid down for moral guidance in temptation by Ignatius of Loyola<sup>1</sup> about eighty years before Shakespeare gave the world *Macbeth*. Banquo's thoughts are in perfect harmony with these principles; he is sure that the Weird Sisters are demons in disguise, and expressly states that oftentimes Spirits of darkness tell us truths to win our confidence and then to betray us into the evils of the "deepest consequence."

Banquo's warning words fell upon listless ears. Macbeth, assured of sovereignty by faith in the prophetic promise, was in exaltation of mind lost in reverie. The two verified predictions he considers but welcome prologues to a drama in which the theme of empire, swelling act by act, shall close happily in his coronation. At this point, roused from abstraction by a suspected breach of decorum, he turns and speaks his thanks to the royal messengers. But observing them in converse apart with Banquo, he resumes his former train of thought, and again lapses into soliloquy. In mental excitement, heightened by a disturbed imagination, he wavers concerning the good or evil nature of the Weird Sisters' promise. Their preternatural excitement of his ruling passion by the assurance of success, cannot be wicked, since it began with a truth; yet it cannot be good, since it suggests for its fulfilment a bloody deed whose horrid image stirs his whole being to revulsion. For this perplexing question, Banquo's warning words offered a solution; but Macbeth, willfully disregarding them, continues in soliloquy to reveal the hue of the visions passing through his mind. His ruling passion having been inflamed by evil spirits, he is subjected to further

1. Discernment of Spirits, Rules IV and V, apud *The Science of Spiritual Life*, by Rev. J. Clare, S. J., p. 261.

temptation by way of the suggestion that Duncan's murder is the means of reaching the throne (ll. 89-127).

## HORRIBLE IMAGININGS

Macbeth has so far been portrayed by the Poet as a loyal subject, possessed of virtues common to honorable men, as the world views them. Lady Macbeth, who had beyond others an intimate knowledge of his character and moral qualities, explicitly affirms that he is "too full of the milk of human kindness to catch the nearest way" to his ambition by a wicked deed; that though he desires the crown, he would have it "holily," without playing "false" or winning wrongfully. Such a man would have repelled with horror the suggestion of foul murder as a means, if it had been at first proposed by the Weird Sisters in conjunction with the promise of the throne. But when, by brooding over their prediction, his ruling passion had become extremely intensified, and his ambition had been fanned to a glowing heat, then they deemed it opportune to take the second step in his temptation. Under their evil influence, his whole nature is disturbed. His external senses, and imagination, and intellectual faculties, seem all affected and distorted in their action, like one obsessed. "Facts are lost sight of; he sees nothing but what is unreal, nothing but the specters of his overwrought fancy. His conscience, acting through his imagination, sets it all on fire, and he is terror-stricken and lost to the sense of things before him," as the elements of evil gather round and strive to press upon him the monstrous purpose (ll. 127-142).

As murder, the proffered means of gratifying his ambition, is shocking and impracticable, he will await events. The Weird Sisters have promised him the crown, perhaps they, too, will secure its attainment. Rejecting the temptation, he still nurtures his passionate ambition. Its growing obstinacy harasses and importunes him, but, unable to proceed from fear of dangers rather than from moral scruples, he finds relief by placing success in the hands of chance. Time sets

all things right. It shall remove all obstructions, and usher in the opportune moment when the fated hour shall strike.

Macbeth's mental abstraction and manifest excitement fill Ross and Angus with surprise, but Banquo seeks to bar or allay their suspicion by equivocating words, which, while concealing the real cause of his partner's disturbance, ascribes it to the new honors of Glamis and of Cawdor. His secrecy concerning the prophecies of the Weird Sisters was prompted, no doubt, by a tacit understanding with Macbeth, as well as by his own interests. Furthermore, his reserved character and secretive temperament, as disclosed in the drama, made him naturally averse to intermeddling with the affairs of others. Certain critics, again, ascribe it to a direct temptation of the "instruments of darkness," and not without good reason. The Weird Sisters were attempting Macbeth's moral ruin, and for success secrecy was all essential;<sup>1</sup> the prophecy of the kingship once disclosed, Duncan would never have fallen a victim to Macbeth's ambition.

In fine, Macbeth's musings are rudely interrupted by Banquo and the king's messengers. They rouse him from the world of dreams to the real life of action. Lost in the perspective of his guilt, he turns round suddenly, alarmed lest his thoughts may be suspected, and instantly uttering the lie of ambition, pours forth in profusion the promised courtesies of a usurper in intention (ll. 142-156).

## SCENE FOURTH

### EXTRAVAGANT EXPECTATIONS

Though Macbeth still be anxious for the throne, he becomes irresolute, and prefers to leave its attainment to the work of chance. The scene considerably advances the action of the drama by eliminating every fortuitous element, and by forcing the hero to resort to decisive measures, if he would realize his hopes. Moreover, as the king in comparison with

1. Book of Spiritual Exercises, Discernment of Spirits, Rule XIII, First Treatise.

his general has thus far appeared in less favorable light, another purpose of the scene is to portray him in more attractive colors; hence, nobility and gentleness of nature, a frank and trustful disposition free from guile and suspicion, an appreciation and recognition of true worth, and a strong affection and absolute trust in his cousin, are all pictured as noble traits in the royal character of Duncan. Our esteem for him is further heightened, when we gaze on the contrast which the same scene portrays in Macbeth. A ruling passion, as a fire consuming his soul, urges him as a subject, to base disloyalty; as a kinsman, to an abuse of confidence and of the natural ties of affection, and in utter disregard of justice, honor, and virtue, to slake in blackest treachery the soul-thirst of his blazing ambition in the resolve to commit a most cruel and abhorrent crime. His treachery grows blacker in contrast with the frankness and honesty of the King.

In Malcolm's description of the thane of Cawdor's execution, several commentators recognize a striking correspondence with the circumstances attending the death of the unfortunate Earl of Essex. His asking pardon of Elizabeth, his confession and repentance, and his concern about behaving with propriety on the scaffold, are all minutely recorded by Stowe. Essex was a bosom friend of the Earl of Southampton, and both were Shakespeare's friends and patrons. As Essex was a popular idol and the favorite of Elizabeth, his execution, occurring only a few years before *Macbeth's* first enactment, was still fresh in the minds of all, and, in consequence, the Poet's allusion to his friend could not fail to have the desired effect upon an audience, many of whom were eye-witnesses to the severity of that justice which deprived the age of its greatest ornament.<sup>1</sup>

Malcolm's description of Cawdor's death causes the king to express surprise that he had been deceived into honoring the traitor with such absolute trust. His deception he ascribes to the fact that the mind's disposition can not be read upon the countenance, as from an open book.

His words, spoken as Macbeth enters, are full of tragic

1. Cf. Steevens apud Furness in loco.

irony. Though the king wonders at Cawdor's treachery and affirms that man's secret thoughts can not be read upon the face, nevertheless, in his guileless and trustful nature, he welcomes to his bosom another and darker traitor, whose unholy ambition shall lead to a more signal and fatal crime. Though Duncan greets his cousin with joy and with soul-felt words of friendship and appreciation, he feels the sting of ingratitude from his inability to reward his general in proportion to his transcendent merits. In reply to his frank sincerity and heartfelt generosity, Macbeth almost overplays the part of loyalty by an effort to conceal his hypocrisy beneath high-flown and unnatural terms of rhetoric (ll. 14-33).

The aged Duncan, surrounded by courtiers and victorious generals, is visibly affected by the strong expressions of their loyalty and the blessings of an unexpected peace, which gladdens a long-troubled land. His "plenteous joys" overburden his kind heart and find relief in tears. Now that peace is restored, and the throne firmly established, the old monarch deems it an opportune time to proclaim the long-delayed creation of Malcolm, his eldest son, to the principedom of Cumberland. The crown was not at that time hereditary. Whomsoever the king chose for the succession, him, according to custom, he created Prince of Cumberland, a title proper only to the crown prince of the realm. The act not only surprised and pained Macbeth, but even harrowed his very soul; for besides disappointing his fond expectations, it, moreover, frustrated his ambitious hopes. But his chagrin, however great, he conceals beneath honeyed words of loyalty, and, in assumed glee, announces his purpose of hurrying on in advance of the royal cavalcade. He must himself bear the glad news that the castle of Inverness shall that night be honored by a kingly visitor. The main purpose of his hasty departure, apart from gaining time to prepare for the entertainment of his guests, is to disclose to Lady Macbeth this new obstacle in the path of their royal aspirations. As a man of practical sense, he perceives that dreams of chance must now yield to active measures (ll. 1-47).

## AN OBSTACLE TO OVERLEAP

Macbeth had decided against active measures for the attainment of the crown, because he believed that Duncan would name him his successor. For this extravagant expectation several reasons, seemingly cogent, loomed up before his ambitious mind. There was the fact that the crown was not hereditary; there was his equal right with Duncan to the throne, since both were sons of sisters of the former king; there was his hope that the aged monarch, weary of the disorders of the troubled times, would abdicate in his favor, or at least bequeath to him the succession rather than to Malcolm, a mere stripling, unskilled to take the helm amid the storms of state. His hopes had, moreover, been further strengthened by Duncan's own promises: "I have begun to plant thee and will labor to make thee full of growing," and again, when he assured him that the thaneship of Cawdor was only "an earnest of a greater honor"; but the only greater honor was the throne. When the king, therefore, proclaimed Malcolm his heir, Macbeth saw in that act the blasting of his hopes and aspirations, and, in consequence, his towering ambition, roused anew, surged in violence against this unlooked for obstacle in his royal path. Nothing now, he feels, save most drastic measures can seat him on the throne. There is no longer question of loyalty or treason; but only of gratifying his flaming ambition. Against the one obstacle in its path, his uncontrolled passion rouses his whole being to rebellion, and upon his excited mind and disturbed imagination, flashes for a moment a strong sense of wrong in the ingratitude and injustice of the old king, whom by valiant arm he had more than once preserved upon the throne.

While in this perturbed state of feeling, the evil spirits who are bent upon his moral ruin, again renew their pernicious efforts. Loving to fish in murky waters, they find no time more promising, than when their prey, in darkness of mind, feels disquiet, weariness, and disgust.<sup>1</sup> When first they

1. St. Ignatius, Book of Exercises, Discernment of Spirits, Rule 4, First Treatise. Science of Spiritual Life, by Rev. J. Clare, S. J., p. 48.

whispered the thought of murder, Macbeth was appalled by its heinousness, and in impassioned words complained of the murderous suggestion :

“Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair,  
And make my seated heart knock at my ribs  
Against the use of nature.”

But, when his ruling passion had under temptation grown more intensified, and the thought of murder more familiar, his evil tempters deemed at length the moment opportune to suggest murder as the only means of removing the one obstacle in his path to the throne. As a man, commencing to surrender to the solicitation of this or that evil passion, forfeits divine assistance, and, abandoned to himself, finds evil agencies ever ready to expedite his descent to perdition; so Macbeth, after long dallying with an evil ambition, instantly crosses the Rubicon of temptation, and at a critical moment accepts the crime from which at first he shrank with horror. His words, however, disclose a nature yet unhardened in evil, and an imagination powerful enough to picture the difficulty and the horror of the murder.

His action by contrast recalls that of David.<sup>1</sup> After the son of Jesse had been chosen by God's prophet and anointed as king to rule over Israel, he received no other immediate mark of God's favor. “He had a severe trial to endure for many years; the trial of being still and doing nothing before God's time, though he had apparently the means in his power of accomplishing the promise for himself. It was to this trial that Jeroboam afterwards showed himself unequal. He too was promised a kingdom, but he was tempted to seize upon it in his own way, and so forfeited God's protection.”<sup>2</sup>

Whilst the dark thoughts of Macbeth's troubled soul find expression in soliloquy, the gracious Duncan, standing apart with Banquo, listens with manifest pleasure, as the latter recounts the noble and valiant qualities of his kinsman. The

1. 1 Sam. 17:5.

2. Cardinal Newman, Character Sketches, Early Years of David.

scene closes with the predominating note of irony, when at the exit of Macbeth, Duncan exclaims, "He is a peerless kinsman" (ll. 48-58)

## SCENE FIFTH

## THE TELLTALE LETTER

Macbeth, still under the influence of evil spirits, fosters his inordinate ambition, and though hesitating at the means suggested, would probably have conquered the temptation, had he not encountered a new ally of the Weird Sisters, who deliberately enters the field of battle with them against his better nature. Lady Macbeth enters hurriedly, as if anxious to finish in seclusion the reading of a letter from her husband. Resuming at the words, "They met me in the day of success." she continues the perusal with mind intensely absorbed, pausing here and there to catch the true meaning of words, so full of terrible significance. She reads the prediction of the Weird Sisters and the reason of her husband's firm faith in their promise of the kingship. The letter, he knew, would awaken a keen interest, and by reason of her master-wish of ambition, would strike the most responsive chord of her heart. His "dearest partner of greatness" is charged "to lay it to heart" and rejoice in the promised queenship. The letter clearly expresses their thorough union of mind and heart, a union of purpose and ambition.

Lady Macbeth gives no thought to the preternatural powers of evil of which the letter speaks, but is wholly engrossed in her dreams of ambition. In comparison with her soldierly husband, who, though most unscrupulous in his ambitious purpose, is still unhardened in crime, she appears from the first indifferent or resigned to evil. The letter, it is clear, makes no reference to Duncan's violent death, yet as she holds it in her hand and in passionate feeling begins to soliloquize, her words indicate that she accepts without misgiving a policy, which under the impulse of mutual ambition, had more than once been made the subject of conjugal

discussion. Hence, reference to the kingship and to her own "promised greatness," is sufficient to engender the thought of murder without the least scruple or mental conflict. Now, that for the first time in intensity of temperament, she realizes the full meaning of the promise, her ruling passion, enkindled and long nurtured in retirement, flames forth and so fires her imagination that she appears wellnigh overpowered by the fumes of her royal aspirations. Reaching an immediate and compelling resolution, her sole concern is her husband's good, easy nature. With a woman's finer instinct, she partly divines and partly anticipates the hesitation which Macbeth afterwards displays. She knows that, though a warrior bold, he is not given needlessly to bloody courses; that, though of a nature not over-strong in morality nor commonly given to scruples, he is, nevertheless, capable of compunction; that he would gain his end openly and honestly, as a straightforward and honorable man, and over many such, religion has little more than a theoretical influence.

Such an estimate of her husband might be correct under ordinary conditions, but not under the extraordinary circumstances in which an unbridled passion, abetted by fiendish tempters, has placed him. If she thought that he shrank instinctively from an unnatural deed, because of natural feelings for humankind; if she believed that while wishing the murder of Duncan, he was unwilling "to catch the nearest way" by imbruing his own hands with his blood; if she imagined that he "would not play false" to gain the crown, and yet would win that which it was wrong to win; if, in a word, she supposed that his recoil from murder was prompted by a manly benevolence, and that his scruples arose from conscientious religious feelings: it was, because, warped in judgment by her own nature so susceptible to the remorse of an awakened conscience, she did not in her inflexibility of will and self-control, comprehend how her husband, in the excitement of a feverish imagination, could be dismayed by fantastic fears, by vague apprehensions, and the dread of foreseen fatal consequences, of which she was little able to

conceive. Her mistaken notion of his character, the drama sufficiently refutes.

Macbeth's ambition she has made her own. His elevation is her exaltation, and to it she subordinates all other interests of life. She is strong where he is weak; her ambition knows no fears nor scruples. Conscious of his irresolution and instability of purpose, she deems her presence requisite, in order that, imparting to him her own self-reliance, singleness of will, and tenacity of resolve, she may goad him on to the consummation of his promised greatness in the crown, to which fate and preternatural agents have destined him. Hence, in a keen spirit of exulting triumph and in an uncontrollable eagerness of anticipation, which expand all her faculties, she summons him in person (ll. 1-28).

#### AN ALLY OF EVIL SPIRITS

Her monologue is interrupted by the hurried entrance of a messenger, "The king comes here tonight!" The tidings so astound her that she can only exclaim, "Thou art mad to say it." Recognizing instantly, however, the compromising nature of her passionate words, she quickly seeks shelter behind questioning words of doubt. The news, in harmony with her murderous thoughts, at once suggests the looked for opportunity; and immediately her glowing imagination grasps its meaning. What may not happen to the unsuspecting Duncan, when once enclosed within her castle? "In an instant her whole nature is strung up to a single end; the long-expected occasion for the concentration of a whole life's energy upon a decisive stroke is come. So rapidly does her imagination move that she sees the deed before her as already done, and, as she casts her eyes upwards, the very raven over her head, a bird of evil omen, seems hoarse from long and loud croaking of the fatal entrance of Duncan under her battlements."<sup>1</sup> The raven's croak, in superstitious lore, was ominous of evil: "When a raven stands on a high place, and looks in a fixed direction. and croaks, thence a corpse comes soon."

1. R. G. Moulton, Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist, p. 159.

The following apostrophe is a luminous refutation of the notion that, from mere affection for her husband, Lady Macbeth, as a tender and most devoted wife, consecrated all her energies to the commission of a horrid crime. Such a supposition endows her character with inconsistency, and is in contradiction with the whole tenor of the tragedy. While, no doubt, she loved her husband well, her affection unportrayed, is left to our surmise. Not so in regard to her inordinate ambition. Her thirst for royalty is clearly pictured as the flaming passion that dominates all her other feelings.

The burden of Macbeth's letter is not affection but "the greatness" that is promised her. Her glowing words of welcome to her husband, returning from the war, are not inspired by love, but by joy at the prospect of royalty; and in the present instance, the same dominant passion impels her to abjure womanhood with its tenderness and love.

With mind bent on murder, her affinity with evil not only attracts but even welcomes kindred evil spirits. Strong in the sense of womanhood and of feminine sensibilities, she feels that to gain the crown she must in violation of her nature crush the instincts of her sex. Her evil prayer would never have been uttered had she been devoid of womanly feelings. They exhibit her in marked contrast with her husband. He battles more or less feebly against the same passion; he never thinks of invoking demons to harden his heart and to seal up his conscience against remorse. Her conflict is of a different nature. It is a conflict, not against her tempters, but against herself, against her feminine sensibilities, and in the struggle she attempts to cry them down, and to suppress them by iron strength of will. The struggle is intense. Appalled by the vision of violence and blood, and trembling from the fearful distrust of her womanly instincts, she cries aloud to the unseen powers of darkness to aid her against the weakness of her nature. They answer her evil prayer. They foment her ruinous passion. They dazzle her imagination with the glittering diadem. They enkindle her

soul to the desperate resolve, until yielding her will to the demons invoked, she freely abandons herself to the excitements of hell. Under their inspiration, her dark eyes aglow with vaulting ambition and intrepid daring, she breaks forth into words fervid and sensitive, which reveal for the first time an imagination great in capacity of suffering. The whole invocation, alive with the excitement of a nature delicate and overstrained, quivers in every word with strange preternatural passion:

LADY MACBETH. . . . Come, you spirits  
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here;  
And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full  
Of direst cruelty!

Such language is, indeed, uncommon to a cold-blooded murderess. Her sentiments, moreover, reveal a conscience still undeafened by that callousness to crime which gives comfort to the criminal. If the forbidding voice of conscience is not the cause of Macbeth's faltering purpose, but fear of foreseen fatal consequences, she, on the contrary, in a greater intensity of ambition, is blind to all consequences of the crime, and is concerned solely with obstacles in her path to royalty. Hence, her next invocation is against remorse. It discloses a vehement and uncontrollable desire that the demons smother her conscience, lest its awakened voice cry out and countermand the execution of her fell and unnatural purpose:

LADY MACBETH. . . . make thick my blood;  
Stop up the access and passage of remorse,  
That no compunctious visitings of nature  
Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between  
The effect and it!

Still fearful of her feminine sensibilities and the repelling power of conscience, she again in the third invocation appeals to those murderous ministers, invisible, horrible beings that foment evil in human minds and hearts; she summons them to come and enthrone themselves in her bosom that, by their

preternatural powers, they may change her milk to gall, and make her insensible to pity and to every feeling of humanity. Under their fell influence, her passion is heightened to demoniac frenzy, as her eyes glittering with infernal fire, her stately form expanded, and her hand clutching convulsively her bosom, she there and then unsexed, "dedicates herself to the powers of hell in a manner more irrevocable than if the bond of blood and parchment had passed between the arch-fiend and herself." Hers is a positive wooing of eternal perdition in a most dauntless self-damnation :

LADY MACBETH. . . . Come to my woman's breasts,  
And take my milk for gall, you murd'ring ministers,  
Wherever in your sightless substances  
You wait on nature's mischief !

In frenzied mind, she now imagines the murderous blade in her grasp, and feeling fully capable of striking the blow herself, she turns to apostrophize the night, invoking her to clothe herself in the blackest smoke of hell that the victim's horrid wound may be veiled from her sight, and that an all-seeing Providence may not mercifully intervene to frustrate the horrid deed :

. . . Come, thick night,  
And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,  
That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,  
Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark,  
To cry, "Hold, hold!"

### GRIM RESOLVE

Macbeth, hastening forward to announce the king's approach, enters hurriedly. His wife, all forgetful of the dangers he encountered and of his happiness at safe return, offers no word of congratulation, manifests no sentiments of love, nor greets him with the "common-places of affection." Her action has sometimes been considered a proof of her lack of real affection, but an examination of her position will disclose that love for her husband was not less, but her ambition

greater. Her supreme passion outglowed every other sentiment. An intense craving for royalty now so absorbed her soul that, oblivious of all else, she could only speak of that which preoccupied to the uttermost the mind of herself and husband. As both placed their highest happiness in the scheme of their exaltation, her words of greeting were most natural, sympathetic, and in perfect consonance with the letter read a few moments previously. That letter was his harbinger and, solely redolent of ambition, it charged her to lay to heart the promise, and to rejoice at the prospect of their greatness. Hence, in imagination aglow with ambition, she greets her husband in words of joyous exaltation, loud and triumphant in tone. Under the impulse of royal hopes, she idolizes him as the thane of Glamis and of Cawdor, but still more as the future king of Scotland. Like many a woman, merging all her ideas of the man in his celebrity, and loving not so much his character as his glory, she indulges this passion, though its fires consume her. She is but a type of a certain class of her sex, earnest and devout worshippers of fame, who will brave suffering, guilt, and obloquy, to bask in the sunshine of renown and glory. His exaltation is her own, and its prospect fills her with enthusiasm, and so transports her with a passionate anticipation of the future that in ardent imagination she sees herself in the living present, crowned with the long longed for diadem. Her enchantment, however, is not shared by Macbeth; his mind is clouded by other thoughts. His bloody project has, indeed, been formed, but the presence of the awaited opportunity has weakened his resolve, and he hopes to regain courage from the firmness of his wife. He had suggested the murder, she now suggests its actual accomplishment.

In the absence of her husband, Lady Macbeth had idealized his character, as free from the wickedness that should attend ambition; but, now, as he stands before her, she detects behind his irresolution a fierce aspect of villainy. At her grim determination, expressed by the words, "never shall sun that morrow see," she reads the bloody purpose reflected in his looks, and fearing lest the murderous frown, lurking, like

the hand-writing of hell, upon his brow, may betray him, she urges the necessity of hiding his intent behind a smiling mask. She herself will take the initiative in the formation of the plot; but he, the while, must present a fair countenance to the guests. Macbeth, in reply, asks delay for further discussion and exhibits his mental state of suspense. Dangers and difficulties disturb his imagination, undermine his courage, and leave him devoid of self-control; hence, his wife attempts to excite in him her own tenacity of will. She counsels "the great ruined man with all the gloom and agony of guilt upon his face, to look up clear;" his altered mien will surely create fear or suspicion in the minds of his guests. With mock courage, stupor of conscience, and a blindness to consequences, with which the demons have preternaturally inspired her, she feels, in the madness of ambition, sufficient courage to manage the bloody enterprise herself. When a woman enters upon the path of degeneracy, she falls quicker and deeper than man; her innate love of virtue, greater delicacy of conscience, and more intimate sense of religion, are her staunch safeguards, which, if once overthrown, leave her to sink helplessly to the lowest depths (ll. 29-71).

## SCENE SIXTH

### THE FATAL ENTRANCE

With the excitement of the former scene, the sixth is in peaceful contrast. The venerable king, pausing before the portals of Macbeth's castle to enjoy its pleasant site and nimble air, listens approvingly to Banquo's poetic discourse upon "the temple-haunting martlet." In the opinion of Sir J. Reynolds, the subject of their quiet and easy conversation gives that repose so necessary to the mind after the tumultuous bustle of the preceding scene, and perfectly contrasts the scene of horror that immediately succeeds. Such is the practice of Homer when, turning from the midst of battles and horrors, he introduces some quiet rural picture to relieve and refresh the mind.

At Lady Macbeth's entrance, the king exclaims, "See, our honored hostess!" In apology for the trouble which his visit may cause, he says: the affection which urges us to desire the society of our friends is sometime the occasion of trouble to them; but still we feel grateful for the affection which is manifested. So she is to regard this visit; and with this view of it, she will be disposed to thank him and pray God to reward him for the trouble which he causes.<sup>1</sup> His royal courtesy, marked by words so affable and overflowing with genuine sentiments of good will, is in dramatic contrast with Lady Macbeth's over-strained expressions of simulated welcome. In her state of mental excitement, she is entirely engrossed with the one purpose of suppressing her overwrought feelings, and of guarding against suspicions. Hence, her labored and empty words of greeting, all devoid of personal traits or sentiments, are solely expressive of general duties. She concludes with the promise that she and her husband, like eremites, will pray for him in return for favors heaped upon their house.

As Macbeth had hurried forward to prepare for the coming of the king, the latter, while naturally expressing surprise at the non-appearance of his host, formally announces himself the thane of Cawdor's guest over-night. Lady Macbeth ignores the king's query; and in allusion to the feudal system, by which the nobles held their titles and domains upon the good pleasure of their sovereign, she again, in general terms, assures him that the castle and all therein are at his royal service. Duncan, in giving his hand to Lady Macbeth, requests her to lead him to his host, and, while passing through the portals, he gives renewed expression of his high love for her husband, and of his purpose of further gracing him with honors. The scene, closing with Duncan's fatal entrance under the battlements of Inverness, leaves the spectator's mind keenly aroused to the contrast between the gracious and unsuspecting Duncan, and the hypocrisy of his cold-blooded hostess; and, as in playful mood the King steps within the murderous den, we instinctively feel chagrin at Banquo's indif-

1. Cf. Hunter, in loco apud *The Variorum Shakespeare*.

ference or inactivity. He knows well Macbeth's character and ambition; knows the promise of the Weird Sisters; how it strangely whetted his desire for the crown; and, moreover, observes his unaccountable failure to welcome the royal guest; and, nevertheless, impervious to suspicions of foul play, he seems to remain indifferent to the fate of his king.

## SCENE SEVENTH

### IN MENTAL CONFLICT

While Lady Macbeth is engaged in the entertainment of the royal guests, her husband, harassed by vivid imaginings concerning the dangers of his project, hurries from the guest-chamber to wrestle in privacy with the fell purpose, the risk of which and rashness a feminine intensity conceals from his wife. Under the influence of evil spirits, he feels the murder, but yet "fantastical," pressed upon his soul as if by destiny. They keep aglow his vaulting ambition, and beckon him onward, but horrible imaginings appall and repel him, imaginings which are only selfish fears of external dangers, intensified by a morbidly active fancy. His soliloquy exhibits no qualms of conscience nor even a trace of genuine compunction. If scruples he has, they are scruples of honor and not of morality; if haunted in mind, it is not by horror of sin nor compassion for his victim, but by the dread of losing the golden opinions so lately won; if he pauses before the crime, it is not from the dread of its enormity, but from fear of fatal results. Before him are clearly traced out the pathways to heaven and to hell: the one unadorned with royalty but unsullied by crime, the other strewn with scepters and diadems, but intermingled with blood; and the dark clouds of perplexity, which encircle him in his faltering ambition, he labors to pierce in a heated soliloquy. It discloses a mental conflict, in which his thoughts are burdened by the consciousness of guilt and the dread of punishment.

His first thought, the keynote to the whole soliloquy, masters him entirely. If the mere murder would surely end the

matter, then the sooner it were done the better. But he fears fatal issues, which the bloody deed may not foreclose. This thought further enlarged upon grows in intensity. If the blow would end with itself, would shut off all dreaded consequences, and ensure success in the attainment of his hopes, then, "here," upon the shoals or shallows of the fluctuating waters of life, he would dare the great abyss of eternity, dare hazard his eternal weal, and "jump the life to come." If he hesitates solely from fear of detection, universal obloquy, and punishment in the present life, it is not from forgetfulness of retribution in the world beyond the grave. He simply ignores it, defies it; for, under the impious incitements of evil spirits, he is reconciled to the crime, ready to fore swear the Creator and eternal happiness, and to sacrifice himself, soul and body to ambition, if only assured of success in his present existence. He is an example of many irreligious men who, in idolatry of pleasure, or wealth, or power, in this fleeting life, scruple not to pay the final price of temporal success, by forfeiting their souls to the devil in defiance of judgment consequent to death, in the courts of eternal Justice.

Macbeth's greatest concern is, therefore, the vengeance which inevitably overtakes the criminal. He fears that his act of treason and of murder will but teach others to turn against himself the weapon he may use on Duncan. Conscious that his crime will arouse universal execration, he proceeds in mental keenness to examine, in rapid review, the causes that underlie its enormity. Fealty to his liege-lord, the bond of kinship, the sacred laws of hospitality, and Duncan's meekness, all cry aloud against it. Moreover, so gentle and irreproachable has been the king's exercise of the prerogatives of his office, that his virtues will speak with trumpet-tongues against the "deep damnation of his taking off." His reasoning, it is clear, is unclouded by passionate emotions, which sometimes overpower man's moral energies. As he recounts the motives that should bar him from the treacherous crime, we listen in vain for the voice of religion or of conscience, which, crying aloud against the inherent abhorrence of the deed, would drive him back appalled and terrified by

the enormity of the contemplated crime. As a practical man, he thinks of the deed only in its extrinsic relation to himself and others, and reaches the climax of repelling motives in the thought that his treachery will excite universal horror against himself, and a pity as universal for his victim. This thought, above all others, sways his excited imagination, and foreseeing a horrible future, he gives expression to his feelings in a pathos full of wild imagery. Recalling, as it seems, the words of the Psalmist, "He ascended upon the cherubim, and flew upon the wings of the wind,"<sup>1</sup> he personifies pity, and imagines it to ride like heaven's cherubim, on the invisible winds, and to call down vengeance upon him, and to fill all eyes with tears.

He regrets, in fine, that, save ambition, he can find no incentive to his villainy. In feverish imagination, he personifies ambition, makes his intended crime a courser, and is himself without a spur to stimulate its slow and halting pace. By another metaphor, ambition is a rider, who, in vaulting upon his steed, overleaps himself, and falls in wretchedness and dishonor on the other side (ll. 1-28).

### HIS EVIL GENIUS

While in this state of vacillation, Macbeth's tempters summon to their aid the woman who has become their willing ally. Her soul bartered for the diadem, and completely under the domination of evil spirits, whom she has invoked, they now preternaturally inspire her to stimulate her husband's courage, and to hold him to his murderous purpose. As his evil genius, Lady Macbeth enters upon the scene, and, by a mixture of love, scorn, and contemptuous taunts of cowardice, smothers his sentiments of loyalty, gratitude, and humanity.

Entering hurriedly in a spirit of vexation, she expostulates with her husband concerning his strange conduct. His failure to welcome the royal guest was marked, and his absence from the banquet had, more than once, given rise to expressions of surprise.

His absence was due to fear of self-betrayal from a conscious inability "to look like the innocent flower and be the serpent under it;" and, again, to an anxious desire to commune alone in the hope of allaying turbulent fears and emotions.

Though Lady Macbeth observes the changed mood reflected in his mein, she is not prepared to hear the conclusion reached in soliloquy, as in tones full of confidence and determination, he exclaims, "We will proceed no further in this business." Not daring to admit that his firm resolve has been undermined by fears of failure and resultant consequences, he invokes noble motives in defense of his changed position.

His attempt is, however, futile. Her insight into his character enables her to discover, behind the mask of specious motives, the real cause of his new resolve. His vacillation at the critical moment, in spite of solemn pledges, induces in her a sudden revulsion of feeling, in which vivid hopes yield to disappointment and depression, and, in a rising anger, whetted by sentiments of contempt and resentment, she launches forth into words full of stinging reproaches, and aglow with withering scorn. Was he in a maudlin state of drunkenness when he bravely formed his plan of action, and does he now awake, crestfallen from a sleeping stupor to shrink craven-spirited from his bold resolve? If he falter now, she will measure his love by his inconsistency and fickleness, and hold it as contemptible as his moral courage. From the knowledge of his character, she proceeds with the quickness of a woman's instinct, to hurl a deadly shaft at the most vulnerable point in the armor of the warrior. If she esteemed his ambition for "the ornament of life" to be the grand aspiration of a valiant man, she must now recognize in his changed purpose the trembling heart of a coward. Shall he unabashed, she asks in taunting, scornful anger, confess himself brave in desire, but a vile poltroon in daring (ll. 28-45)?

"Her argument," affirms Dr. Johnson, "affords a proof of Shakespeare's knowledge of human nature. The excellence

and dignity of courage, a glittering idea, which has dazzled mankind from age to age, is a topic always employed with much success.' It is urged in the present instance with peculiar propriety; valor is the characteristic virtue in which a soldier glories, and, therefore, he cannot well bear the reproach of cowardice from any woman, especially from the one he loves. Sensitive of the injustice of his wife's reproach, Macbeth is quick to retort by distinguishing true from false fortitude, loyalty from treachery, and the valor of a soldier in open, honorable warfare from the courage of a sneaking assassin, bent on perpetrating secret murder. Hence, irritated and stung to the quick, he in turn utters in anger the noble words "that have done so much to gain him a place in the army of martyrs to wifely temptation," words, which, according to Dr. Johnson, would bestow immortality upon the Poet, though all his other productions had been lost:

MACBETH.

Prithee, peace:

I dare do all that may become a man;

Who dares do more is none.

### HIS LAST STAND

By this exalted sentiment of his reawakened nobler self he makes a last stand against the contemplated treachery. His defense is, however, quickly beaten down by his wife, who, in a renewed attack of embittered vehemence, scornfully asks: if the project be unmanly—be not the device of a man—what beast made him first moot it to her? When he dared be more than what he was—a king—then indeed was he more than a man.

In deepening anger, she ridicules his fickleness and inconsistency: having resolved upon the deed and sworn to it, notwithstanding overwhelming obstacles, now, when chance unexpectedly offers opportunity of time and place, he falters like a craven.

It is clear from the context that Duncan's murder had been previously discussed and resolved upon. The fifth scene disclosed that Lady Macbeth, in assuming the management of

"this night's great business," required her husband only "to look up clear." In the present, the seventh scene, we see, however, a change in their plans; Macbeth is to do the bloody deed and has even sworn it. We may suppose that in the interim, between the king's arrival before sundown and the banquet some hours later, Macbeth found the sought-for opportunity of "speaking further," and, in that secret interview, expressed a readiness "to bear the knife himself;" but that, from the fear of his supposed scruples, she exacted from him an oath against shrinking from the "fell purpose." Recalling now this oath, she scornfully charges him with perfidy, and, in an *a pari* argument, attempts by sheer shame to awaken his criminal resolution. To infuse into her words the greatest force, she assumes the strongest possible parallel, and colors it in every circumstance. Macbeth has sworn to do a dreadful deed, but halts at its performance; had she so sworn, nothing, however horrible and unnatural, would terrify her into violating her oath. The murder of a loving, benevolent, old man is indeed most abhorrent; but what is its enormity compared with the crime of a mother, who, without any conceivable motive, would, in defiance of nature's most holy law, outrage maternal affection, by murdering her own innocent, helpless, smiling babe at her breast? Yet, had she so sworn, she would be true to her oath, though it ruptured her very heart. Her growing anger and scornful altercation has induced an hysterical excitement. The thought that "the ornament of life," for which she has exchanged her immortal soul, is about to be lost, when almost within her grasp, fills her with unnatural frenzy, and, in strident, rising voice, she shrieks out her words in abandonment of all womanly seemliness. Her thoughts and feelings are, however, not a mother's, but those of an infatuated frenzied woman, obsessed and controlled by the "murdering ministers" of hell, whom she had so impiously invoked.

Influenced by the present passage, certain critics ascribe to Lady Macbeth a natural cruelty of character. It seems, however, more in conformity with Shakespeare's genius to view her boasted cruelty as only temporarily assumed. Her

design is to rouse Macbeth from lethargy of purpose; but if her horrible threat were due to natural ferocity, it would lend but little force to her argument; while on the contrary, if he believes her to be capable of such horrid cruelty, merely by reason of a vow, then in his eyes she becomes an ideal heroine.

She, therefore, assumes a cruelty of character, which a flaming passion of ambition, supported by an iron energy of will and a fierce vehemence of purpose, enables her, for the moment, to fuse it into her personality with the view of making her husband believe it to be her own, and thus to shame him into overcoming his irresolution.

The argument by which Lady Macbeth urges upon her husband the force of his oath, Dr. Johnson notes well, is "an art of sophistry by which men have sometimes deluded their conscience, and persuaded themselves that what would be criminal in others is virtuous in them," by reason of the oath that binds them. Such was the wicked Herod, who murdered the Baptist, because he had sworn to give a dancing damsel anything she asked. It is clear to every Christian mind that an oath is binding only when it is just. It is clear that an oath to commit murder is not only criminal in itself, but also that its fulfilment is a still more heinous crime. How wicked persons, indifferent to all sacred things and unscrupulous in the violation of human and divine laws, will sometimes scrupulously observe the counterfeit obligation of an evil oath, is a marvel to the Christian man, a sophistry and a folly, which can be ascribed solely to the moral blindness that afflicts the sinner, after sin has seared his conscience (II. 47-59).

### CAPITULATION

Derided, baited, and his courage and affections pitted against his conscience by the woman whom he loves, Macbeth is near capitulation. Her terrible onslaught of scorn and demoniacal eloquence has driven him from the covert of honorable manhood into open expression, as, in awe, and yet in admiration of her boasted heroism, he admits fear to be

the real and sole cause of his hesitation. Instantly, she seizes the plea, and in cool determination, characteristic of a woman, dazzled by an unholy ambition, and blind to its fatal consequences, she flouts the very thought of failure with all its unfortunate results. If, to be king, he has resolved "to jump the life to come," she, too, to be queen, is ready to jump the present life. But why speak of failure, when success is assured? In low, confidential voice, she proceeds in earnest tones to sketch her well concerted plan, in which the murder shall appear the act of the grooms. Her scheme seems so feasible, and so appeals to Macbeth's practical mind that, for the moment, he is lost in admiration of the astuteness and daring of the woman. Grasping her scheme before it is half disclosed, he exultingly completes it. The practical details of the plot are seized by the practical mind of a man pre-eminent in action. He finds himself in his native element, and passes instantly from hesitation to fierce resolve (ll. 59-82).

The temptation is complete. His tempters have triumphed. Evil spirits have, through Lady Macbeth, conquered where alone they would have failed. By their aid, she soars before his imagination like a fiery Nemesis that is commissioned to bring fate to mortals. With an invincible mental power she has totally eradicated his fears by forcing the belief that he can commit the crime and escape its infamy, can gain the throne and retain secure the good will of his fellowmen. His fears are banished. The plot seems practical and even brilliant. He summons all his fortitude, and proceeds to the bloody work without further recoil; and we experience the greatest horror at seeing her who loves him so well, link herself with the infernal powers to urge him on to perdition.

## ACT SECOND

### SCENE FIRST

#### AN UNEXPECTED MEETING

At the opening of the Second Act, the spectator is prepared for the tragic event so near at hand. Within the castle, the guests who had caroused in the banquet-hall till long after midnight have retired to rest; without, no silvery moon softens the dense darkness of the courtyard, and all seems wrapt in the stillness of the dead. But the breathless silence is soon broken by two restless guests, who by the flare of a torch find their way across the open court. The location of the weird scene has always afforded matter for discussion. The Poet very likely had in mind a large interior court with galleries around the sides, into which opened chambers that were reached by stairways from below. The entrance to the courtyard was by a "college-like gateway," adjoining which was a porter's lodge. That such a court, common to mansions of noblemen in Shakespeare's day, is the place upon which the Second Act opens, is indicated by circumstances scattered through three scenes.<sup>1</sup>

The time is about two o'clock in the morning, as Lady Macbeth discloses later. The approach of dawn has already paled the light of the flickering stars, when Banquo is seen passing through the dark open courtyard. Nervous and leaden in spirits, he is oppressed by drowsiness, consequent upon the drugged possets which were served by the hostess. He complains to Fleance of his fear to sleep, because he may again be haunted by those tempters of the night, evil spirits,

1. "Buildings of this description arose in ages of chivalry, when knights rode into their courts and paid their devoirs to ladies, viewers of their tilting from those open galleries. Fragments of some of them, once the mansions of noblemen, are still subsisting in London, changed to hotels or inns. Shakespeare might see them much more entire and take his notion from them."—Capell, apud *The Variorum Shakespeare*, p. 113.

that "tend on mortal thoughts," and try the souls of men when their senses are deadened by sleep. Thus, Milton pictures Satan at the ear of sleeping Eve, pouring disturbing thoughts into her soul; and Shakespeare insinuates that the evil spirits whom Banquo had challenged on the heath at Forres were continually, though invisibly, inciting him to ambition and to crime. Aware of the latent power of evil suggestions, he shrinks from them with horror, and rejecting the means of mischief by ridding himself of sword and dagger, he implores the "merciful powers" of heaven "to restrain the cursed thoughts." The poisoned darts of the tempters recoil, blunted by his virtuous character, because, free from inordinate ambition, he offers no opening to their malign attacks.

Here, the contrast between Macbeth and Banquo reveals that the power of evil spirits is proportioned to man's affinity with evil. Banquo rejects and prays against temptations; Macbeth invites and cherishes them. The one awakened, scrupulously invokes heaven against evil suggestions in sleep; the other, unscrupulously catching at them, eagerly hurries into temptation. The one will not slumber, lest he be again assailed by horrid phantoms of crime; the other, restless through watchful hours and, anxiously awaiting the moment to strike the murderous blow, welcomes them and blindly yields to their guidance.

Banquo's prayerful words are scarcely uttered before a torch-bearer, followed by another figure, enters the darkened court. Suspecting the character of visitors at that strange hour, he hurriedly seizes his sword. Macbeth is not less surprised than Banquo, and both exclaim with one voice, "What, sir, not yet at rest?" The thane of Cawdor hears in brief that the king, highly pleased with his entertainment had, before retiring for the night, liberally rewarded the household officers, and commissioned Banquo to present a gift of rare value to his kind hostess. The narration, while again emphasizing the trustfulness and graciousness of the guest now sleeping in the lion's den, also marks anew the ingratitude of the guilty thane. Macbeth, by way of apology, replies that the entertainment would have been ampler had he had

sufficient notice of the king's visit. Probably in intent to discover the thane's intentions, Banquo alludes to his dream of the Weird Sisters. Macbeth, however, dissembles and diplomatically sounds him concerning his support hereafter. In words studiously obscure, he promises honors, if he will adhere to him when the prophecy of the Weird Sisters shall have been verified. Banquo's reply clearly indicates suspicion: no new honor shall be acceptable to him, if acquired dishonorably; "He shall keep his bosom franchised and his allegiance clear."

### BANQUO'S TEMPTATION

The peculiar tenor of Banquo's dreams, which, as already noted, were full of "cursed thoughts," which horrified and stirred him to prayer on awaking, is no less obscure than is the special direction under which temptation assailed him. It is unlikely that murder was suggested as a stepping stone to royalty. His course to the kingship was far from clear; in his path were Duncan, Malcolm, and Macbeth. The crown, moreover, which was promised to the thane of Cawdor, was not to descend to himself, but to his children; and, therefore, his temptation was not likely an incitement to crime and usurpation.

Was Banquo's temptation then in relation to Macbeth? The former had observed how the Weird Sisters cast their spell upon the thane, and led him to accept their predictions with a firm and absolute faith. He himself, suspecting the evil purpose of those preternatural beings, had felt obliged to caution him against their wiles:

"Oftentimes to win us to our harm,  
The instruments of darkness tell us truths,  
Win us with honest trifles, to betray 's  
In deepest consequence."

In the meanwhile Banquo had noted the thane's continuous brooding over the promised kingship. He had marked the striking change in his conduct; had recalled the repeated solicitations to espouse his cause; had wondered at his sur-

prising failure to receive and to welcome his royal guest on the previous evening, and had noticed his unaccountable absence from the banquet; hence, even though he did not divine the desperate purpose of Macbeth, he had, nevertheless, from his whole conduct since the Weird Sisters hailed him "king hereafter," ample reason for suspicion and mistrust. Did then the temptation, the "cursed thoughts," of which he complains, consist in suggestions to throw in his lot with Macbeth's, so that by advancing him to the throne he might promote his own cause? Or was his temptation a struggle between bloody thoughts, which suspicious fancy conjured up against the thane, and his own virtuous and noble nature, which was shocked at the thought of attributing to an honorable man, a fellow officer and friend, a criminal purpose, treasonable and most abhorrent, without sufficient proof? Or again, suspecting Macbeth's purpose of foul play, was Banquo's temptation a struggle between conscience on the one side, which dictated that duty and loyalty obliged him to guard the king by revealing his suspicions, and reason on the other side, which insisted on prudential silence; since he could not proffer proofs for such heinous suspicions? Whatever the temptation was, it resulted in Banquo's silence, and that silence furthered Macbeth's murderous purpose, as was the fell design of the Weird Sisters. Evil Spirits hate the truth, hate the light of exposure, and always strive to enshroud their malicious movements in darkness and secrecy. This truth is emphasized by St. Ignatius in his thirteenth rule for the discernment of Spirits: "The devil studiously endeavors, that the soul which he desires to circumvent and ruin shall keep his deceitful suggestions secret, and is highly displeased, if his attempts be made known to any one, because he understands that thereby he altogether fails in them."<sup>1</sup> (ll. 1-30.)

### A DIABOLICAL SPECTACLE

Macbeth again alone, impatiently awaits the tinkling of the bell, which, as prearranged, is the signal that all is opportune

1. Spiritual Exercises, Rules for Discernment of Spirits, First Treatise.

for the fatal stroke. Groping his way by slow steps through the deserted courtyard, he feels oppressed by the appalling silence and darkness of the night. As he peers into black vacancy, he halts in suspense and bewilderment at the sudden sight of a luminous drawn dagger, which floats before his eyes in the direction of Duncan's chamber. His first emotion is a puzzling surprise, but it is intermingled with no sentiment of fear nor terror. That he reveals no abhorrent feelings at the ghostly diabolical spectacle; that he neither starts nor shudders at the thought of following its murderous beckonings, is because, his moral nature stifled, his soul is in harmony with those malign spirits, whose evil guidance he follows willingly. Hence, the preternatural vision animates his courage and fills him with confidence. That stained dagger is the instrument of those unseen agencies who, still favoring his bloody project, beckon him on as by fate to the deed, which, he thinks, shall crown him with honor and happiness. Hence, courageously he reaches out impulsively to clutch it. But its delusiveness, frustrating his repeated attempts, startles him and leads him in bewilderment to doubt its reality.

Is the dagger a ghostly apparition presented by his tempters, or is it only the product of Macbeth's overwrought brain? The senses, it is true, are commonly roused to action only by their material proper objects. There are instances, however, though rarely, when the imagination in abnormal excitement, as in hysteria, inversely affects the outer sense, and, so powerfully, as to cause the eye to perceive a thing as existing without, objectively, which is unreal and only subjective within the imagination. That such was the dagger floating before the eyes of Macbeth is often taken for granted by the modern stage; but our modern stage is not a safe guide, since it is dominated by the irreligious and materialistic spirit of our day. Materialists, admitting only such realities in nature as are subject to our senses, must, to be consistent with their doctrines, deny all spiritual and preternatural existences.<sup>1</sup> The supposition of a purely imaginative dagger is, furthermore,

1. Cf. an exhaustive refutation in *Der Kosmos* (Paderborn, 1908) by Const. Gutherlet. For a lucid exposition of Materialism, consult the same author in *Catholic Encyclopedia*.

refuted by the action of Macbeth himself. A person whose imagination is beyond the control of reason, mistakes his hallucination for a thing real and objective, and will listen to nothing in disproof of its reality; while Macbeth, on the contrary, when unable to clutch the dagger, reasons against its objective existence, and is inclined to consider it merely

“A dagger of the mind, a false creation  
Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain.”

It is of little import that Macbeth himself doubts the reality of the dagger. His reasoning is based on the fallacy that he can clutch a ghostly phantom-dagger; as well might he try to clutch a shadow or a sunbeam. Disregarding, therefore, his doubt and his fallacious reasoning, and turning to a safer guide—to the Poet himself—we find on unmistakable evidence that, in his day and long after, the dagger was objectively represented on the stage, as a ghostly and preternatural phantom. Irrespective of this evidence, the nature of the tragedy itself leads to the same conclusion. If Shakespeare has constructed the drama upon a preternatural foundation, and if he has created the Weird Sisters as the visible forms of evil spirits, all intent on Macbeth's moral ruin, it is surely not unnatural, but even incumbent upon a master-artist to choose means in harmony with those same preternatural agencies. As the guiding spirits of Macbeth, they naturally seek, on the very threshold of his guilt, to preclude his further faltering, by presenting before his eyes a ghostly dagger, which, with its blade now shining brightly, and now crimsoned with gore, floats through the air, like the Weird Sisters themselves, and marshals him the way that he is going. Such representations were, furthermore, common rather than exceptional in the Elizabethan age. Then the masses, like Shakespeare himself, were deeply imbued with Christian principles, and firmly believed in the supernatural, as well as in the existence of the preternatural. Hence, though such scenes too often lose their meaning in a more materialistic age, they were considered proper in the Poet's day; by exciting the spectator to surprise and wonder, and

by inspiring him with awe, they infused into the drama a special charm, and elevated it beyond the ordinary or common phase of life.

Though Macbeth often faltered, when meditating on the contemplated crime, he seems in presence of the fated hour to feel a dilation of his whole being. His fancy is crowded with unusual imagery and he rises to the loftiest tones. "Like the poet invoking his muse, he calls on night to scarf up the tender eye of pitiful day, and moves on to the deed itself with the exalted language of a Hebrew poet." His imagination again dwelling on the night and the evil deeds perpetrated under its sheltering gloom, he observes that now, when half the earth is palled in darkness, and sleeping nature seems dead, the powers of evil, the disturbers of the world, find it opportune to practice sorcery and witchcraft, and to celebrate fiendish rites to the queen of Hades. In mythology, "pale Hecate" was another name for Diana. The latter was associated with moon-worship, ghosts, and shades of the dead. Hecate was, however, more commonly identified with Proserpine, an infernal cruel deity, who, having at her command all the powers of magic, sent forth at night from the netherworld all kinds of demons to teach sorcery, witchcraft, and other diableries. Images crowd upon Macbeth, and from Hecate his thoughts turn to the howling wolf, the night's prowling marauder, and to the stealthy pacing murderer, and to the wicked Tarquin, who, like himself now gliding in silence over the flags of the courtyard, moved ghost-like to his evil purpose:

"Between the acting of a dreadful thing  
And the first motion, all the interim is  
Like a fantasma or a hideous dream." 1

In vivid fancy he apostrophizes the firm-set earth and the stones on which he treads, lest by betraying him, they break the silence so horrid, and so well suited to his bloody work. As he checks his poetic musings at the thought of time for action, he hears the bell in the clock-tower toll two. Its sound

1. Julius Caesar, II, i.

recalls the death-knell, or the customary tolling of a bell for the dying, and in a low, firm tone of determination he affirms it to be the knell of Duncan. It is, however, his own knell as well, a knell that tolls his moral death, a death that shall hurl him from the heaven of his ambition to a hell of crime and guilty fears, which shall drive him on to eternal misery and despair (ll. 31-64).

## SCENE SECOND

### HOPES AND FEARS

While Macbeth tremulously glides away, following the phantom-dagger on his errand of death, Lady Macbeth, battling with contending hopes and fears, enters in excitement and breathless suspense. Like many perpetrators of crime, who nerve themselves with stimulants to paralyze their conscience against the thunders of heaven, she has resorted to the stupefying influence of wine. Though it mitigates her violent emotions, deadens her feminine susceptibilities, and animates her courage, it also reveals a woman's nature, which, though inflexible of will, is not hardened in evil nor insensible to crime. Evil spirits may dominate her will, but they cannot completely eradicate feelings natural to her feminine nature. Entering hurriedly in a tremor of emotion, she discloses her highly wrought feelings in aspirated whispered words: "That which hath made them drunk hath made me bold, hath given me fire." Her actions, however, in contradiction to her words, tell that her boldness is not real, but assumed. She starts at every noise; the shriek of the owl flitting through the silent courtyard stirs her anew to fear and morbid excitement. That shriek at the moment of Duncan's murder she fancies to be the voice of the "fatal bellman" who commonly visits a prisoner on the eve of execution. The cry of the night-owl, as an evil omen, was a deep-rooted superstition among all the Indo-Germanic races, and extended back even to pagan Rome. Nervously excited and breathing with difficulty, Lady Mac-

beth, in trepidation treads noiselessly toward the door. Listening intensely she exclaims in suppressed voice, "he is about it," and tells in low excited whispers of the snoring of the grooms, whose drink she had so highly drugged that life and death seemed to "contend about them."

In the meanwhile, as Macbeth in mental excitement and disturbed imagination, was nearing Duncan's chamber, he heard a noise, as he fancied in the court below. Perhaps Banquo and Fleance are again astir. Pausing a moment in fearful suspense, he rushes back bewildered, and, peering from the balcony down to the dark courtyard, he calls, "Who's there?" But, seeing and hearing nothing, he hurries back to the inner chamber to perpetrate the crime. Lady Macbeth hears the noise and, at once seized with dread and dismay, expresses her agonizing terror by hoarse whisperings and wild gestures. Fearing that the awakened grooms or guests may foil the murderous plot, she regrets that she herself had not struck the blow, when, a few moments before, she had placed the daggers beside the sleeping king. Her failure arose from a fancied resemblance to her father, which she recognized in the silver-haired Duncan, and which, awakening fond memories, stirred her woman's heart to tenderness. It is another brief artistic touch, by which the Poet reminds us that she is not an inhuman anomaly; that even though abandoned to an evil passion and to the guidance of the powers of darkness, she still retains, under the guise of mock courage or bravado, some sentiments becoming to womanly nature.

### THE REACTION

Macbeth in fear and tremor rushes in with uplifted daggers. His countenance suffused with pallor, and, his wild eyes staring to the right and left, he exclaims, "I have done the deed. Did'st thou not hear a noise?" Lady Macbeth, taken by surprise and amazed at his changed appearance, can only mutter, "My husband!" The excited whisperings, which follow, "so laconic and yet so heart-piercing between the two, who dare not meet each other's eyes, belong to the most powerful that the poetry of all ages has created." Unassured

by his wife, Macbeth, awe-struck, hoarsely whispers, "Hark!" In breathless suspense he listens with straining, eager ear for any sound that may break the silence of the night.

Before the perpetration of the crime he showed himself in the dagger-scene a man of action, who, instead of shrinking from the murder, rather exulted therein; but a change comes, when passing from the world of action to the realm of thought and reflection, he utterly succumbs to unfamiliar fears and terrors.

After a momentary paroxysm of dismay, his intellect, stimulated by a fevered imagination, begins to work at a surprising pace. Staring wildly at his bloody hands he sees "a sorry sight," and gives voice to images that crowd upon his distorted fancy. His thoughts are a wonderful example of a runaway intellect, unchecked by a will powerless to stay it. Again, he hears the grooms, the one laughing in sleep, the other crying murder, and both awakened, resorting to prayer against the fear of evil. His disordered mind is unable to see that murder and prayer are incompatible, and he wonders why he could not join them in their invocation to heaven. His regrets recall the hypocritical action of many great criminals, who, in superstitious belief, have in their course of evil invoked the aid of the Almighty. Macbeth's mental trouble at inability to pray does not proceed, however, from true remorse, or from a repentance that is prompted by a conscience awakened to a sense of abhorrent guilt. There is no consideration for the stricken victim, nor a sensible realization of the immoral nature of the crime which crimsones his soul with heinous guilt. His is a mental perturbation, arising, not from the crime already done, but solely from a riotous imagination, which conjures up vividly the horror of irrepressible future consequences, and whose menace, loud as heaven's angry thunders, reverberates through the halls of his wild and morbid fancy.

Thus far Lady Macbeth had by the aid of stimulants braced her failing nerves; but now, the sight of her husband's bloody hands, his excited mutterings, uncontrolled agitation, and ravings of fancy, which seem completely to unman and

to rob him of reason, grate harshly upon her nerves, and affect her like a hideous contagion. Feeling, for the moment, a sensation of horror creeping over her, she yields to fright, and shuddering, speaks prophetically, though unconsciously, of madness, which, indeed, ultimately overtakes her. Unheeding her impassioned words, Macbeth, still enslaved by his imagination, begins to repeat in agonizing tones the words of the "airy voices, sleep no more! Macbeth doth murder sleep." These airy voices, in Holinshed, whence the Poet borrows the incident, are recorded as objectively real and not the product of the murderer's imagination. They seem indelibly inscribed upon his memory, and, spellbound by their menace, he begins, in overwrought imagination, to expatiate in high poetic terms upon the peculiar properties of sleep. To his wife, his words are meaningless, and in amazement and dismay she interrupts and questions, "What do you mean?" But undisturbed by her words and even oblivious of her presence, he remains so wrapt in that mysterious voice, still re-echoing in his ears the dread penalty of his crime, that, in unmeasured anxiety and grief, he runs on expressing his feelings of horror in harrowing strains: "Glamis hath murdered sleep, and, therefore, Cawdor shall sleep no more," therefore, king "Macbeth shall sleep no more!" He has murdered sleep, and, therefore, what avails the crime? Its fruit shall turn to ashes in his grasp.

Lady Macbeth is bewildered at his strange and vivid word-painting, and, unable to decide whether the voices were real or imaginary, she exclaims, "Who was it that thus cried?" She perceives the mental storm that agitates his soul and catches in his impassioned tones his feelings of alarm and woe. Summoning all the resources of her dominating spirit, she seeks to allay his fears, and to still the tempest raging in his distempered mind. Approaching closely, and gazing steadfastly into his wildly staring eyes, she attempts by earnest words of remonstrance and reassurance to wake him from the nightmare of a brain-sick fancy to the realities of actual life. Go, she says, "wash this filthy witness from your hand." It is an easy task she thinks; but later during many sleepless

nights she will herself in heart-breaking sighs of guilt and woe bemoan that "all the perfumes of Arabia" will not smother the smell of blood upon her "little hand" (ll. 1-47).

### REPEATED KNOCKINGS

Laboring earnestly to calm her husband, Lady Macbeth observes the daggers in his grasp. In excitement he had forgotten to smear them with blood and place them beside the sleeping grooms. The sight at once arouses her to anger and, sharply upbraiding his blunder, she insists on his returning instantly to correct it, lest suspicion fall on them and their murderous plot come to naught. Macbeth, when face to face with action, was firm of resolution; he had only to strike the fatal blow; but now, when engulfed in the world of thought and reflection, his habitual irresolution returns to master him, and in high excitement, swayed by a disturbed imagination, he cries out in agonizing despair that he dare not return, dare not even think of his gruesome crime, nor again look upon his murdered victim. Such unexpected infirmity of purpose stirs Lady Macbeth to intensest anger; but, obliged to confront alone the dilemma, she maintains her self-possession and faces unflinchingly the dire necessity of saving their plot from failure. Her indomitable will at once aroused to action, her remorseless ambition smothers all feeling of humanity, and, in an outburst of anger and contempt, she snatches the daggers from his trembling grasp and, in high exaltation of spirits, goes back to complete the plot in the presence of the dead king and the sleeping witnesses. At that awful moment she can even jest on the word "gild." In the Poet's day, red was the popularly known color of gold, hence arose common phrases, such as "golden blood," and "gild with blood." By her jest, thinks Clarendon, Shakespeare thought to enhance the horror of the scene. Her play of fancy seems a beam of ghastly sunshine, gleaming over gloomy, storm-beaten crags.

No sooner is Macbeth left alone than he hears loud knockings, which again arouse his uncontrolled imagination. So

disturbed are his senses, and so confused his mind that he cannot tell whence they proceed. Every noise appals him. The repeated knocking of Macduff and Lennox at the south gate of the courtyard affrights him, and the fear of discovery fills him with terror. Their knockings are not louder than the voice of conscience, which accuses and condemns him. The horrifying sight of his bloody hands, uplifted before his wild bewildered eyes, throws him into a frenzied horror. All ocean's waters cannot wash away those cursed stains; rather will his foully crimsoned hands turn all the green waters of the deep to a uniform red.

While Macbeth, overpowered by emotions of horror, is still staring on the indelible proofs of crime upon his hands, and uttering words of agonizing despair, his wife returning confronts him with hands as red as his, and sneeringly taunts him with shame for wearing "a heart so white." Beneath her words is recognized an effort to break the spell of fear and remorse, in which an overwrought imagination holds him. Her iron will unwavering, her high temperament practiced to self-control, and her intoxication of ambition, heightened by fumes of wine, enable her to repress feminine sensibilities, and to maintain a forced calm under the stressful ordeal. Hence, while her distracted husband trembles from fear at the continued knocking, she, apparently undisturbed, devises means for their mutual safety, and airily assures him that a little water will clear them of this deed. As Macbeth, still in the throes of remorse and fear of detection, is hurried away, he glances back and in a look of agony implores the importunate visitors to wake Duncan by their knocking, if they can.

After the murder Macbeth becomes, like all unhardened criminals, a prey to the stings of conscience, whose moral principles, seldom extirpated, now begin to react upon him. While the evil tempters roused his keen ambition by the dazzling glare of royalty, his mind, in a false exaltation, disregarded these moral principles and, yielding to impiety and contempt of future retribution, was ready to barter his soul for the crown; but, in the inevitable reaction, these immutable and eternal moral principles return in violence to accuse and

condemn him. Now he sees that crime is a two-faced figure, which, clothed with meretricious smiles and fascination before the fatal step, reveals after it her horrid countenance, distorted by agony and despair, and encircled by the writhing, hissing snakes of hell. His soul now darkened with horror, he shudders at the atrocity of his crime. Each knock at the gate seems the voice of conscience proclaiming his guilt. In the consciousness of perfidy and of the universal indignation it will excite; in the apprehension that both heaven and earth are stirred up against him, his imagination is haunted with tremendous images, and his soul is distracted with remorse and terror. By the murder he had placed himself in the power of his evil tempters, and they will drive him on enslaved to further crime, till he falls in unending misery and despair (ll. 48-74).

### SCENE THIRD

#### THE DEVIL-PORTER

The episode with which the third scene opens has been rejected as genuine by no less a critic than Coleridge. "The low soliloquy of the porter," he says, "and his few speeches afterwards, I believe to have been written for the mob by some other hand, perhaps with Shakespeare's consent, and that finding it take, he with the ink of a pen otherwise employed just interpolated the words:

"I'll devil-porter it no further. I had thought to have  
Let in some of all professions that go the primrose  
Way to the everlasting bonfire."

Of the rest, not one syllable has the ever present being of Shakespeare." Leighton, another eminent critic, considers that the episode is too coarse for a play otherwise correct; that it is un-Shakespearean in regard to style and to certain words, which are nowhere else used by the Poet; and that it bears too close a similarity to Middleton's work; hence, he concludes that the latter patched the play at this place, and did it unskillfully.

In more recent times, critics are, however, inclined to hold that the episode is genuine and an integral part of the play, though it may have suffered some corruption in the porter's speech.<sup>1</sup> The curtain falls upon the exit of Macbeth only to rise immediately with no change of scene upon the entrance of the porter. If the sudden knocking at the gate in the previous scene is admittedly an integral part of the play, so in the opening of the third scene is the same continued knocking, which finally awakens the porter from his sottish sleep. Viewed dramatically, the episode is necessary; some delay is required to allow the criminals to change attire and to rid themselves of the bloody witness of their crime, as resolved upon at the close of the previous scene. Such delay is artistically supplied by the introduction of a maudlin porter, who, entering wrathful against inopportune disturbers and fumbling for his keys, indulges the while in a brief soliloquy. The objection that the scene is out of place in a tragedy so severe as *Macbeth* is indeed valid in regard to the classic drama, but in the romantic, of which Shakespeare is the founder, it has no real value. All his tragedies, in harmony with the law of contrasts, intermingle the serious and the comic. In the present instance, some relief was necessary; a monotony of horror palls upon the senses. Shakespeare, therefore, borrowing an idea from the Morality Plays, which still flourished in his day, introduces the comic incident of the porter, whose drollery, like that of the grave-diggers in *Hamlet*, relaxes the minds of his auditors before taxing them anew with other tragic events. While, therefore, there is every probability that the episode in its general conception, rhythmic prose, and grotesque humor, which is not at the Poet's best, is Shakespearean, there is, on the other hand, much evidence to infer that the reference to a tailor, a farmer, and an equivocator, is an interpolation by a later hand. "This allusion to the times," affirms Walker, "is certainly un-Shakespearean, and strengthens Coleridge's hypothesis of the spuriousness of part of the Porter's soliloquy."

1. Cf. W. E. Hales, Notes and Essays.

## THE EQUIVOCATOR

Granting then the interpolation in question, and that it betrays the hand of Middleton, and, furthermore, recalling the well-known fact that, to cater to the new popular taste of his day, he introduced into *Macbeth* new witch-scenes with musical accompaniment, it is certainly not unreasonable to suppose that, to win popular favor, he also, like contemporary dramatists, catered to the prevalent intolerant religious spirit of the times, by interpolating certain quips against the hated and persecuted Catholics. In acceptance of this view, the "equivocator," says Collier, "seems to have been introduced at a subsequent period for the purpose of exciting applause by reference to something which was then attracting public attention." "As equivocation," says Hudson, "was a favorite theme of invective with Protestant preachers of those times, it could not but be familiar to the public, who then frequented the pulpit as assiduously as the stage." These invectives of the preachers against equivocation were aimed at Catholics, who refused to conform to the new Protestant religion of the State. That weak Catholics at that time resorted to dissimulation is an historic fact; the persecution, which raged against them under Elizabeth, attained such severity under her successor that no Catholic could in safety profess his religion openly. Many, says Lingard, the historian,<sup>1</sup> to preserve their families from starvation, by reason of multiplied fines, decided to do violence to their conscience once or twice and appear at the hated religious service, which a tyrant had imposed upon them. "Some to escape the penalties, attended occasionally at the established service and endeavored to elude the charge of hypocrisy by maintaining, from the words of the queen's proclamation, that such attendance was with them nothing more than the discharge of a civil duty, an expression of their obedience to the letter of the law." An eye witness, Father Parsons, a Jesuit, then ministering by stealth to Catholics under severe persecution, writes: "The priests who publicly celebrate the spurious liturgy of the new religion

say Mass in private for the benefit of the more faithful Catholics. Many under the stress of persecution erroneously think that, as long as they remain firm in the faith that the Catholic Church is the only true Church of Christ, an act of conformity, now and then, due to fear rather than to change of will, cannot make them cease to be true sons of the Church." This fact some wag of Shakespeare's day emphasized in the following lines popular at that period and entitled "Few Words are Best:"

"There be diverse Papists, that to save their fine,  
Come to Church once a month, to service divine,  
The Pope gives them power, as they say, to do so;  
They save money by it, too; — but I know what I know."

### THE JESUITS

Though Middleton's (1570-1627) interpolation of the text may find some palliation in his common weakness, as a playwright, to cater to the popular anti-Catholic spirit of his day, the same cannot be said of Warburton (1698-1779). His prejudice against the Catholic Faith, which was still under persecution, seems to have so blurred his mental vision that he saw the lone equivocator of the text multiply into a whole army of Jesuits. "The equivocator," he affirms, "has reference to the Jesuits, the inventors of the execrable doctrine of equivocation." "Of that low fellow, Warburton," as Hume, the historian dubs him, we read in a biographical sketch:<sup>1</sup> "He went somewhat out of his way to issue an edition of Shakespeare with notes critical and emendatory, which last, though ingenious and occasionally happy, did not greatly add to his reputation." His foolhardy opinion illustrates how intelligent men, when blinded in mind and warped in judgment by ill-feeling and prejudice, will, without examination, rashly accept as true whatever is in harmony with their predilections. Great as was Mr. Warburton's dislike of the Catholic Church, his antipathy to the Jesuits was still greater. By their zeal in defense of the Catholic Faith they had merited the extreme hatred of Reformers. Nothing could sup-

1. The International Cyclopaedia, Vol. XV.

press their energy; nothing could daunt their zeal; nothing could terrify them from labors in defense of man's natural right of liberty of conscience, which a bloody persecution obliged them to undertake in secret. In spite of imprisonment in loathsome dungeons, in spite of the rack and the hangman's rope, they took their lives in their hands, and, though constantly tracked by *pursuivants*, labored on secretly under ever changing aliases and disguises, ministering in hiding places to the persevering faithful; and to them was greatly due the preservation of the flickering flame of the Catholic Faith from final extinction. Such irrepressible ardor could not but enrage the Reformers, and from the pulpit, the rostrum, and the press, they thundered their wrath against them. No slander was too vile, no tale too incredible, no calumny too atrocious to be uttered against the disguised and ubiquitous Jesuits, and their vilification, born of the rancorous religious spirit of those days, has survived with inherited prejudices through succeeding generations, and has stained the pages of English Literature for more than three centuries, even down to our own times.

As Warburton's gratuitous assertion has been copied without question by several subsequent non-Catholic annotators, it is important to note its falsehood. It is not true that the Jesuits invented the "execrable doctrine of equivocation," nor that Catholics teach and practice it, as Mr. Warburton understands it. Before the birth of the Society of Jesus in the sixteenth century, moral philosophers, to say nothing of theologians, had treated of the moral question of equivocation, or mental reservation. They distinguished two kinds: the one properly and the other improperly so called; the former always a lie and, therefore, "execrable," and the latter not a lie, and at times permissible. Catholic moralists teach that a lie is never lawful, not even a lie of necessity. Justice and charity, however, require that secrets be kept, and often they can be kept only by means of equivocation, or mental reservation. But in one kind of mental reservation the speaker mentally restricts his words to a sense, which in no manner can be known from the words themselves nor from circumstances.

As if on being asked, "are you going to town today?" one would answer, "yes," meaning in imagination. Such mental reservations being equivalent to lies are prohibited as sinful. But, otherwise is the case with mental reservations widely so called. In such the words are capable of being understood in different senses, either, because they are ambiguous in themselves, as when our Lord said, "the maiden is not dead but sleepeth;" or, again, because the words, though not ambiguous, have a special sense derived from circumstances of time, place, or persons. Thus the "not at home" of the servant may mean that his master is absent or that he does not wish to see the visitor. The "I don't know" of the doctor or lawyer concerning a professional secret, means I have no knowledge which I may communicate; similarly, a priest, questioned about a sin which a penitent has confessed to him, may reply, "I never heard of it." All are aware that, as a priest, he can never speak of any thing he has heard in sacramental confession; hence his words can only mean, I never heard of it outside the confessional. Such mental reservation was employed by our Saviour when He replied to his disciples that no one but the Father knew the time of the General Judgment.<sup>1</sup> Wide mental reservations, therefore, are not lies and are sometimes necessary, as the sole means of keeping secrets. If they were never lawful, the common good or great private good would often have to be sacrificed without sufficient reason. One who uses wide mental reservation, as an unavoidable means, intends directly to save a private person or the public from injury; and in so doing he is not the cause but the justifiable occasion of error in the mind of the rash questioner. Yet mental reservation must not be employed without just cause; for the good of society requires that we should speak our mind, with frankness and sincerity, in the sense in which we are understood by our hearers, unless there be a good and sufficient reason which justifies us to allow the rash inquirer to deceive himself by taking our words in a sense that we do not mean.<sup>2</sup>

1. Matth. 14:36.

2. Cf. Genicot, *Theol. Moralis*, Vol. 1, n. 414. Slater, *Moral Theology*, Vol. 1, p. 467. Rickaby, *Moral Philosophy*, p. 232.

With the above universal teaching of Catholic moralists Warburton seems to have been remarkably unfamiliar; hence, in ignorance, as we may suppose, of the two kinds of equivocation, or mental reservation—the one always a lie and never permissible, and the other not a lie and licit under grave circumstances—he made light of charging a large body of educated and religious men with “execrable morals.”

### FATHER GARNET

Actuated by similar bias, Malone (1741-1812) readily accepted without question the opinion of Warburton, and, even going further, ventured to guess that the equivocator of the text had reference to the Jesuit, Henry Garnet, a martyr for the Faith in the days of Middleton. In opposition to Malone are, however, many critics: Collier affirms that “little confidence should be placed in Malone’s opinion, since the application is too obscure;” and Flathe considers the opinion most odd and asks: “How could so great and ingenious a Poet dream of interpolating in his work so foreign a subject?”<sup>1</sup> As Malone’s opinion is quoted by several annotators without any qualification, and appears in several school editions of Macbeth, it seems proper to show by a brief exposé of Garnet’s case that the opinion rests upon an error of fact. The story of the Gunpowder Plot has been recounted through the years by many writers strongly prejudiced, who have garnished it with all manner of unhistorical accretions; but when stripped, under the searchlight of modern criticism, of the many fables woven around it by popular fancy, it appears very favorable to Garnet. If to this day his case is still discussed in an unfriendly spirit by a few Protestant writers, whose striking bias and prejudices undermine their position, there are, on the other hand, several non-Catholic writers, as well as many great Catholic theologians, who have been outspoken in Garnet’s defense, and among them Bellarmine and Suarez.

1. J. L. Flathe, Shakespeare in seiner Wirklichkeit, 2 apud Furness.

Some days before the arrest of the conspirators<sup>1</sup> Garnet first learned from Greenway of the Gunpowder plot in *sacramental confession*, and conjured him to do all in his power to stop Catesby's mad enterprise. After the arrest of the conspirators the ministers persuaded themselves that the Jesuits were deeply implicated in the conspiracy, and, wishing to connect the Church with the plot as an excuse for increasing the cruelty of their persecution, they subjected the prisoners to every artifice that human ingenuity could devise: promises, threats, and torture of the rack to extort some avowal of guilt on the part of the Jesuits. But all in vain; the prisoners under torture swore to the innocence of the missionaries. As Garnet was superior of the Jesuits, against him the government directed all its efforts. He was arrested and confined a solitary for many months in a deep and loathsome dungeon. Though often subjected to the torture of the rack, to spying, to eavesdropping, to forged papers, to counterfeit correspondence, to lies of pretended friends, to falsehoods forced upon him to draw confessions, and to continued cross-examinations by the most eminent talent, his defense was simple, honest, and convincing. His testimony could not be shaken. "If in moments of supreme difficulties under such circumstances, Garnet, wholly isolated and allowed no counsel for defense, seemed at times lacking in worldly wisdom, "it is hard to see," says Dr. Lingard, "where we can blame him, considering the simplicity of his character and the continuous

1. The conspirators with Catesby, the originator of the plot, were young hot-bloods who suffered much for religion and lost most of their property. Though irritated against the government by reason of its code of "infamous laws of persecution," they nurtured hopes of religious toleration with the accession of the son of Mary Stuart; but with Elizabethan ministers in office the king was unable to give the Catholics the promised relief. In fact the malice of the persecutors daily aggravated their burdens and the number of martyrs was not far short of the Elizabethan average. Catesby in despair of relief saw no remedy except in extremes and consequently resolved upon the mad project of the Gunpowder Plot. When Garnet heard in general terms that trouble was intended, he inculcated upon Catesby the obligation of leaving the redress of wrongs to the justice of heaven. Catesby indignantly replied: "It is to you and such as you that we owe our present calamities. This doctrine of non-resistance makes us slaves. No authority of priest or pontiff can deprive man of his right to repel injustice." Garnet fearing results wrote to his superior in Rome: "Under persecution Catholics will no longer be quiet. Jesuits can not hinder it. Let the Pope forbid all Catholics to stir." (Morris, Condition of Catholics, p. 72.) In reply, a letter from Rome reached Blackwell and Garnet, commanding them in *mandato papae* to hinder by every possible means all conspiracies of Catholics. (Record Office, London. Dom. Jac. XV. 13.)

frauds and deceptions practiced upon him. If I had been in Garnet's place, I think I should have acted exactly as did Garnet."<sup>1</sup> Surely, Garnet cannot be blamed for the use of licit mental reservation to save his life, and the lives and fortunes of others, who had harbored him from a persecuting government which, under cover of law, was conspiring by falsehood and forgery to destroy them. The "notorious" Chief Justice Coke<sup>2</sup> had boasted that he would show him to have been the author and adviser of the plot, but he failed: "All that was proved against him after long and untiring efforts was that he had failed to betray to the government a secret of Sacramental Confession," a secret which his priestly duty obliged him to guard even at the cost of his life.<sup>3</sup>

It is clear, therefore, that Malone blindly following the blind, fell into the same pitfall as Warburton; for it is evident that Garnet's mental reservation was not equivocation, as understood in the text, and as the world understands it—that is, "a falsehood from which the liar thinks to excuse himself by some double meaning in his own mind *which is in no way expressed by gesture, sign, or circumstances.*" When, however, a persecuting government, which assumed his guilt without proof, and was intent upon his destruction, attempted by every means fair or foul to ensnare him and his associates, Garnet, in the consciousness of his innocence, was in his perilous position surely justified in using wide mental reservation, which, as already explained, is essentially different from equivocation as commonly understood, and which all moralists allow under such circumstances. By such reservation alone

1. Lingard's History of England, Vol. VII, Chap. 1, p. 30.

2. "In state's prosecutions he hunted down his victim with the eagerness and the sagacity of the bloodhound, sparing neither fraud nor falsehood to secure a conviction." Cf. History of England. Lingard, Vol. VII, p. 145. (Edinburgh Edition, 1902.)

3. A similar case occurred in New York in 1812 and excited national interest. Father Kohlman, S. J., had been instrumental in having stolen goods restored to the owner. The latter insisting on exposing and punishing the culprit, attempted by legal process to compel the priest to break the secrecy of confession. On refusal Father Kohlman was imprisoned for months and from pulpits and the public press was subjected to much vilification. The case in the meanwhile was appealed to a higher court where the priest was acquitted by the decision of De Witt Clinton. The principle involved led to the enactment of a law in 1828, by which "no priest shall be allowed to disclose any confession made to him in his professional character."—Cf. Thomas F. Meehan in Catholic Encyclopedia, 1913.

could he guard a sacred and sacramental secret, and save innocent parties from unjust oppression. It enabled him to escape the deadly snares which conspirators had deftly woven about him, and strong in faith and conscientious duty to fight his way to the martyr's crown. In the words of his bitter persecutors, "if under these circumstances he was to suffer, he would suffer, not for treason, but for the conscientious discharge of his duty."<sup>1</sup>

### THE REAL EQUIVOCATOR

But why wander outside the text into odd paths for identification of the equivocator? The man, says Flathe, whom the Porter imagines waiting for admission at the infernal gate, is "just such another as Banquo; one who like him would fain shelter his treachery behind the name of God taken in vain. Banquo did that when in gross self-deception he implored 'the merciful powers' to restrain his perfectly just thoughts of Macbeth, which, he would fain persuade himself, are 'cursed.'"<sup>2</sup> But preferable, in all probability, is Professor Dowden's judgment that the equivocator is Macbeth himself. "The Porter," he says, "uses the word equivocator as well as hell-gate with unconscious reference to Macbeth, who even then had begun to find that he 'could not equivocate to heaven.' The equivocator, who, the Porter says, 'is here,' and whom he tells 'to come in,' is the same Macbeth of whom Macduff says a few lines later on, 'here he comes,' and who begins to equivocate forthwith."<sup>3</sup>

To look upon the Porter's scene, however, as merely a means to relieve the mental strain of the audience, is to miss a grand lesson, which its irony insinuates. It is in fact a rich mine, wherein a delver may unearth many nuggets of golden thoughts. The Porter's speech, weird and intensely ironical, strikes in dramatic relevancy a minor chord, which vibrates in unison with the grand tragic harmony of the

1. Lingard, *ibidem*, p. 78. Cf. Month, July and Sept., 1888. Bartoli, p. 546. More, 316. Butler's *Memoires*, II. 124. For list of most recent bibliographies, cf. Catholic Encyclopedia, 1913.

2. In loco citato.

3. Apud Variorum Shakespeare, p. 147.

drama. The previous scene exposed subjectively the feelings of the murderer. His conscience, lacerated by the enormity of the crime, his soul, a moral wreck, storm-tossed by the roaring breakers of fear and remorse, and his mental agony, which compelled him to cry out in despair, that all ocean's waters would not cleanse him of his guilt, indicate the subjective hell aglow within his tortured soul. From this, Shakespeare turns to another and objective hell, wherein is portrayed with striking energy the "deep damnation" of the crime. In dreams disturbed by clamor and loud knockings, the tipsy Porter imagines the castle of Macbeth a hell and himself a devil-porter at its gate; and his dream has, indeed, from its tragic background an appearance of truth. Macbeth is but a universal type in illustration of many mortals who, dominated by some ruling passion, hurry on to evil, even to the abyss of hell. Hither, says the devil-porter, come thieves, suicides, equivocators, and crowds of all conditions, who tread the "primrose path of dalliance,"<sup>1</sup> multitudes who walk "the flowery way that leads to the broad gate and the great fire."<sup>2</sup> Hence, the overworked Porter grumbles at the constant knocking. But what are these common sinners in comparison with the bloody criminal and equivocator, whose castle-gate the devil-porter guards? In exchange for transient power and glory, Macbeth has forfeited his eternal weal, and his wife, inflamed by like ambition, has yielded herself unsexed to the power of evil spirits. Both, in violating the law of the Almighty, have joined the rebel hosts of hell. The bloody seal of Cain, stamped upon their souls, transforms them to the images of devils. The design of the spirits of darkness is complete: both are the victims of the fiends of hell. Of this horrible result of crime, Shakespeare makes us sensible by means of the Porter's scene, wherein the criminal's castle is a moral hell with a devil-porter at its gate, and "the other devil" mentioned is none other than the murderous equivocator, Macbeth himself (II. 1-27).

1. Hamlet, I. iii.

2. All's Well That Ends Well, IV, v.

## THE ALARM

With the morning breaking rapidly, the pounding at the gate and the loud voices admonish the guilty pair that the crisis is at hand. Ready to join in the expected tumult, they must maintain a perfect self-command, be loud in expressions of feigned surprise and horror, and wear an assumed innocence that will bear unflinching the searching eyes of the questioning thanes. Hurrying upon the scene, Macbeth calmly greets the first arrivals. As a man of action, he is again in his element, perfectly at home. His imminent peril has roused him to the necessity of dissimulating both in word and action; but his keen alertness and anxiety lead him into an occasional error in his part. First, a guilty conscience clouds his judgment, when leading Macduff to Duncan's chamber, he himself remains without in marked hesitation instead of boldly knocking and summoning the king. Another error is his unguarded modification of the reply to Lennox's question, "Goes the king hence today?"

Concerning the Poet's reference to nature's sympathetic mourning over the death of Duncan, Chambers remarks: "Shakespeare uses freely what Ruskin regards as the device of a second-rate poet, the pathetic fallacy—that is, he attributes to inanimate things of nature a sympathy with the moods and passions of men."<sup>1</sup> The objection seems invalid, since this pathetic fallacy has been employed by all the greatest poets, and is in fact a universal concept common to the poetry of every land. To the graphic and detailed narration of the frightful storm and its reported preternatural horrors, Macbeth can but reply, "it was a rough night"; for while politely assuming an air of listening to Lennox's story, his was the listless attention of a mind which is anxiously engrossed with the expectation of hearing Macduff's ontery of horror and alarm instantly resound within Duncan's chamber.

Macbeth's anxious expectations were instantly realized, when Macduff, overcome with amazement and horror at the

1. E. K. Chambers, *Macbeth*, p. 25.

sight of the murdered king and the sleeping grooms smeared with blood, rushed back shouting the murder in terror and alarm. Macbeth plays well his part. In looks of surprise and innocence, he listens to Macduff's loud and excited declaration that destruction has done its masterwork by the hand of the sacrilegious murderer, who broke open "the anointed temple" of the Lord, and stole therefrom "the life of the building." In this thought, non-Catholic critics usually note a confusion of metaphors. With Delius they affirm: "The temple can not be properly designated as anointed, it is Duncan who is the Lord's anointed." The confusion seems, however, to rest with the critics rather than with Shakespeare, a confusion very natural to the minds of non-Catholics, to whom an anointed temple is a thing unknown. But to Shakespeare, as well as to every Catholic, the metaphor is in perfect harmony; since Catholic temples are by prescribed religious rites anointed with holy unction. This fact was as familiar to the Poet as to his audience. The Catholic Faith and its sacramental rites and ceremonies were well known in his day, when England was not yet Protestantized, save by act of Parliament. Catholic temples, therefore, Delius notwithstanding, "can be properly designated as anointed," because they are so *de facto*. Not primarily designed as meeting-houses, but as sacred edifices, wherein sacrifices are offered with solemn rites to the Most High, and wherein the Man-God, veiled under the Eucharistic elements, dwells upon the altar, it is, indeed, proper that such temples be blessed and consecrated with holy unction after the most solemn manner.

Though Duncan at his coronation was, like every Catholic king, anointed according to the Church's ritual, yet there is another sense in which he may be properly termed "the Lord's anointed," and this sense St. Paul indicated in words addressed to the early Christians, "Ye are temples of the living God."<sup>1</sup> The Apostle's teaching, which has always been accepted by Catholics, was also held by Protestants of the Poet's day. With Catholic doctrines and ceremonies

Shakespeare must have been most familiar; for, while in catering to the anti-Catholic spirit of the times, contemporary dramatists often misrepresent them, he never throughout his numerous works falls into a single error. The Church teaches that every baptized Christian, living in the state of sanctifying grace, is in truth a living "temple of the living God." In baptismal regeneration, man's material nature is not only consecrated to God by the sacramental unction of holy chrism, but his spiritual nature is also sanctified by the sacred unction of divine grace, poured into his soul by the Holy Spirit; and this unction of soul and body is again renewed in sacramental confirmation with the result that the Christian becomes in truth "the Lord's anointed temple," a living "temple of the living God." Such a temple can be desecrated by naught save the guilt of grievous sin. But Duncan was undoubtedly a Christian of noble and virtuous character, as Shakespeare more than once portrays him. If, therefore, individually as a Christian, he became, as above noted, by reason of sacramental unction, "the temple of the living God," and, furthermore, if, as king, he was again anointed as the representative of God in the material or civil order, the Poet could surely with propriety call him "the Lord's anointed temple," and affirm that the robbery of "the life of the building" was an act, not only murderous, but also sacrilegious.

After Macbeth and Lennox have hurried forth to see for themselves, Macduff continues to sound the alarm and to rouse the guests from sleep, the image of death, in order that they may gaze upon death itself, and like ghosts from the grave look upon the horrid deed. The tower-bell in rapid strokes rings the alarm, and Lady Macbeth enters hurriedly in apparent distress and dismay (ll. 28-66).

#### ABSENCE OF LADY MACBETH

The reader will be naturally surprised, when noticing that in most of the modern representations of the tragedy, Lady Macbeth is excluded from the present scene. Though the mutilation be prompted by convenience of the manager

or actress, it seems, nevertheless, unpardonable. The absence of the heroine at this, the most critical moment, certainly mars the highly artistic and tragical effect intended by the Poet. Whatever be the extrinsic reasons for her absence, for her presence there are many intrinsic to the drama itself. She is mistress of the castle, and retaining perfect self-control, perceives clearly that she must act her part in the crisis, if she would attain what she most desires: the concealment of her own and her husband's guilt. When shouts of murder and cries of horror re-echo through the castle; when the rapid peals of the alarming tower-bell arouse the guests in affright, and cause them, half-clad, to throng the stairs and corridors; when, in fine, the whole mansion is astir in panic and commotion, and all in fear and dread are distracted by the wild cries of murder, surely the mistress of the castle cannot, all heedless of the uproar, remain in hiding without engendering suspicion in the minds of her excited guests. Moreover, though her own anxiety concerning the discovery is intense, still more so is her solicitude to countenance her husband, who, lately so unmanned, must now undergo a more severe trial, wherein shall be taxed all his powers of self-possession, cunning, prudence, and dissimulation. The issues involved are, therefore, too momentous to allow her absence, and judging of her character, as portrayed in the drama, the reader will seek her where Shakespeare has placed her, intermingling amid the uproar and commotion with her panic-stricken guests.<sup>1</sup>

Lady Macbeth, therefore, appears most opportunely upon the scene, and, as if, like her guests, roused from slumber by the shouts and the clangorous tones of the great bell, she hurries forward, and in well-feigned excitement and surprise, demands "why such a hideous trumpet calls to parley the sleepers of the house?" Macduff's reply, think certain critics, suggests to her the ruse of fainting, which she executes a few moments later. Though fully self-possessed and alert to her danger, her anxiety to repel any probable suspi-

1. Cf. J. S. Knowles, *Lectures on Dramatic Literature*, p. 57. G. Fletcher, *Studies of Shakespeare*, p. 164.

cion, causes her almost to betray herself. From her previous knowledge of the crime, she manifests less horror than others at the news of the dreadful murder and, dwelling upon a mere circumstance as of more importance, exclaims, "What, in our house?" If innocent, her first thoughts would have been, not of herself, but of the king, whose murder would have overpowered her as the rest with surprise and horror. Her words, however, which seem the result of a studied course of action, by which she hoped to avert suspicion, startle Banquo, who, fixing his gaze upon her, exclaims in sternness, "Too cruel anywhere." From his tone and reprehensive words she at once perceives her incautious blunder.

### THE FATAL ERROR

In the scene of discovery, Macbeth plays the innocent more adroitly than his guilty partner. Returning from the death-chamber to the crowding, excited guests, he perceives the need of instant action, the need of simulating unrestrained grief at the murder of his royal guest. Always himself in the field of action, his intellect and imagination, though spurred to high activity, are kept under perfect control, as with consummate art he pours forth rapid, brilliant thoughts, which strike the naturally expected notes of grief and anger, the grief of a loving subject and the anger of a generous host. He declaims in nicely linked metaphors that the murder has robbed our sky-vaulted earth of its renown and grace, and left us in the kingly corpse the mere lees after the wine of life has been drawn. His words of lament are, however, an unconscious prophecy of his own fate; murderous treachery has changed his "renown" into infamy, and banished "grace" from his blood-stained soul.

Upon the entrance of the young princes, whom Macbeth first informs of their father's murder, he continues to display with skill his simulated grief. All listen eagerly to Lennox, as he briefly yet graphically describes what he and Macbeth had discovered, when they rushed to the scene of the murder. The grooms, the supposed murderers, he says, "Stared and were distracted; no man's life was to be trusted with them."

When Lennox hurried forth from the dreadful scene, Macbeth tarried for some moments and, as he gazed on the drugged grooms, conflicting and bewildering thoughts held him in terrible suspense. In the mental crisis, he felt that he must act and act quickly; in another moment the sleeping grooms aroused would tell their tale. Next flashed upon him the thought that dead men tell no tales and, under a blind and maddening impulse, he rushed forward to stab them with their own bloody daggers. In mental disturbance, he did not foresee that his deed was a mortal blow at the well devised plot of Lady Macbeth, and, furthermore, exposed him to suspicion. Now, recognizing his error, he seeks cunningly to cover it by openly professing repentance for the fury which then overmastered him. Hitherto, he had, amid the general confusion, escaped suspicion, but his blundering attempt to excuse himself instantly attracts attention. Macduff, startled by his words, voices the general rising suspicion by the cruel accusing question, "Wherefore did you do so?" The act was, indeed, questionable, and Macbeth perceives that he must instantly extricate himself in the eyes of Macduff and of the crowding inquiring guests. Alert and self-possessed, even though under high mental pressure, he immediately in the boldness of a soldier, breaks forth into heated questions: "Who can be wise, amazed, temperate and furious, loyal and neutral in a moment?" Who, in presence of that bloody scene, could restrain his heart's love, when he had the courage to make that love known? Under the mental strain of feigning grief and of dissimulating guilt, his strong imagination is aglow with fantastic images, and, in consequence, his excuse is diffuse and overwrought with description. If it be said that the speech in its forced metaphors and horrors, is not the natural expression of unfeigned grief and regret, but rather the artificial language of dissimulation, and such as no innocent man would use under the circumstances, it is well to recall with Dr. Johnson, that Shakespeare's evident purpose is to show, by Macbeth's artifice and dissimulation, the difference between the studied language of hypocrisy and the natural outcries of sudden passion (ll. 67-105).

**FALLS IN A SWOON**

Macbeth's speech is suddenly interrupted by his wife, when with a cry for help she falls in a swoon. Whether her fainting is real or assumed is a matter which the Poet has left to the reader to decide. The acceptance of one opinion or the other is of little import; since, in either case the effect is the same: the saving of Macbeth from the impending crisis by at once diverting attention to herself. In the present, as in other instances, Shakespeare seems to have yielded to his fondness for piquing the curiosity of his auditors by leaving them to guess his secret. If Macbeth exhibits no concern for his stricken wife, his apparent indifference finds a ready explanation in his intense excitement, extreme distraction, and overwhelming sense of the crisis which he faces in the presence of the crowding guests. It is, moreover, likely that, judging by his own duplicity, he regards her swoon as nothing more than a dextrous feint to rescue him from a painful predicament. If the swoon were an artifice, Lady Macbeth would evidently have employed it at the most opportune moment when, in presence of the nobles, the murder of Duncan was first announced to her amid the uproar of the guests. Her character, moreover, as portrayed in the drama, discloses no natural trait of duplicity or cunning, but rather a masculine boldness, which, at such a critical moment, would have prompted her to stand by her husband instead of deserting him. Common interests and a common stake now in jeopardy demanded that, if able, she face the ordeal with him, and by her presence aid at all hazards in the crisis. Hers hitherto had been the master-spirit and the master-hand in the fashioning and in the execution of the plot; but, now in alarm, she observes that he had marred it by wresting the mastery from her. If the new murders overwhelm her with surprise and horror, it is because she has neither anticipated them, nor steeled her iron will in a resolve to accept them. She, furthermore, perceives that his blunder in killing the grooms has attracted instead of diverting suspicion; and, as she listens in amazement to his highly

colored terms of grief and horror, she trembles lest he cause the guests to suspect the secret. His bloody revellings in exaggerations and his painting in a living picture of hideous colors the horror of their mutual crime, stir her moral nature to a revulsion of feeling hitherto unfelt. In the reaction of her overtaxed powers, she has held out to the end of her husband's blundering speech; but, as in tremor and dismay, she sees suspicion reflected from the faces of the thanes as they look significantly at each other, she stands aghast in guilty fear. An overpowering faintness saps her strength and, yielding to the agitation which she had battled against so long, she falls helpless in an overwhelming sense of impending evil.

While Lady Macbeth is attended to, the young princes, Malcolm and Donalbain, engage in an aside, in which they agree that the arguments which Macbeth has adduced for his swelling grief, appear stronger for their own affliction. Suspicious of foul play and of the thane of Cawdor's feigned grief, they are mastered for the moment, more by fear than by sorrow and, instead of joining in the general lamentation, counsel flight: they know that the secret murderer has the same motive to use the blade against themselves.

After Lady Macbeth is borne away, the nobles see the reasonableness of Banquo's suggestion that inquiry into the murder, which they all suspect, be deferred till a more fitting moment. His proposal seems opportune, since all, at the uproar and the sound of the alarm bell, had rushed forth undressed and were now suffering from exposure. When properly attired, they can gather to question further "this most bloody piece of work." Banquo all too late complains of his "fears and scruples"; had he heeded them a few hours earlier, he would have saved the king. With his knowledge, a secret to himself and the thane of Cawdor, he has, above all others, reasons to suspect the real murderer. Acting on his strong suspicions, he professes before Macbeth and all the nobles that, placing himself under the direction of Divine Providence and trusting in His aid, he will battle against the undiscovered purpose of the murderer's "treason-

ous malice." His resolve firm and forcibly uttered is shared by all. To Macbeth it is a menace, and there and then he feels fear and hatred of Banquo engendered in his heart. But, in cunning dissimulation he brusquely invites them all, after putting on their armor, to assemble quickly for consultation in the hall. All retire as agreed, save Malcolm and Donalbain. These young princes, fearing treason, hold aloof. They see "daggers in men's smiles," suspect the hollowness of the nobles' sorrow, and mutually express suspicion of Macbeth's murderous treason. He, their nearest kin, is also likely their deadliest foe. They will "to horse" without ceremony and adieus, and so avoid the bloody shaft of the murderous usurper, which must pass through them before it can reach the crown. The action of the princes was an incident most fortunate for Macbeth; their failure to join in the general grief over the murder of their father; their strangely holding aloof from the nobles; and their unseemly flight, are facts which enable Macbeth to draw suspicion from himself, and to concentrate it upon themselves (ll. 105-133).

## SCENE FOURTH

### THE CORONATION

As the present scene is incidental and in no way affects the progress of events, it is often omitted in modern presentations of the play. It is, however, of no small importance; it affords a breathing spell in the hurried action of the drama, and, furthermore, allows time, not only for Macbeth's coronation, but also for the Poet to portray the strange portents that accompanied the murder, and to show how it was viewed by the outer world. Superstitious signs and omens are not inconsistent with the weird atmosphere of a drama, whose basic elements are uncanny and preternatural. As Shakespeare's purpose in associating the appearance of the Weird Sisters, the ministers of evil, with sudden storms of thunder and lightning, is to indicate the relationship, or affinity between material storms and spiritual tempests of

the soul, so again, in the present scene, he dwells on the storms, and the darkness, and omens as circumstances which attended Duncan's murder. Strange and dreadful, they surpassed anything remembered by an old man of more than seventy years. The heavens in rebellion at the murder threatened dire consequences. The day in shame refused to look upon it, and black night triumphed in the deed of darkness. These circumstances, as well as that of the mousing owl, which pounced upon and killed the proudly soaring falcon, and of the mad horses in wild rebellion against their masters, both typifying Macbeth's murderous treason against his king, are all borrowed from the chronicles of Holinshed. Recording them as occurring at the murder of King Duff by Dunwald, he writes: "For the space of six months together after this heinous murder thus committed, there appeared no sun by day nor moon by night in any part of the realm, but still was the sky covered with continual clouds, and sometimes such outrageous winds arose with lightnings and tempests that the people were in great fear of present destruction. Monstrous sights also that were seen within the Scottish kingdom that year were these, horses in Lothian, being of singular beauty and swiftness, did eat their own flesh . . . there was a sparrow hawk also strangled by an owl."

Ross and Macduff exemplify two different types of noblemen; some, like the former, unscrupulous and time-serving courtiers, acknowledge the kingship of Macbeth and follow his fortunes; others, like Macduff, candid, honorable, and loyal, suspecting the double crime of treachery and murder, hold aloof and refuse allegiance. The king's sons, Malcolm and Donalbain, had by their untimely flight enabled the usurper to throw suspicion on them. The theory that on hearing of the slaughter of the grooms, whom they had suborned, they suspected the discovery of their plot and sought safety in secret and hurried flight, may have appeared plausible enough to the popular mind; but to loyal nobles like Macduff it seemed too unnatural, and they adhered to their well-grounded suspicion of treachery. Supposing the guilt of the king's sons, then Macbeth in the popular view,

as Duncan's first cousin and the greatest warrior of the people, might naturally claim the throne, and he was in fact already on his way to Scone for coronation. Scone, an ancient royal city, now in ruins, was situated on the left bank of the Tay, about two miles from Perth. It was the famed seat of a far-renowned abbey, which the new Protestant sect destroyed by fire in the summer of 1559. In the abbey was the stone of Scone, which, originally transported from Ireland, was brought to Scone by Kenneth II. in the year 842. From that time the stone became the customary seat of coronation, and on it was crowned a long series of Scottish kings. Borne away to England by Edward I. in the year 1296, it has since been enclosed in the English coronation chair in Westminster Abbey.

In the dialogue that follows, are again contrasted the characters of Ross and Macduff. The former, a facile courtier and fortune-hunter, readily announces himself an unquestioning adherent of the new regime, while Macduff, a man of noble sentiments of honor and loyalty, refuses to countenance by his presence the coronation of a suspected usurper. His words of final parting to Ross express a fear that their future fate shall be less propitious than their past. The old man, less well informed and more optimistic, prays God's blessing upon them and all who shall labor to turn evil into good.

While Macbeth was hastening to Scone, "the body of Duncan," writes Holinshed, "was removed and conveyed unto Colmekill and there laid in a sepulchre among his predecessors. Colmekill, the famous *Iona* of the Western Isles, now known as Icolmekill, was once the most important of the whole cluster of British Isles. Its celebrity was due to St. Columba, who made it the seat, or center of his widespread missionary labors. Born at Garten in Ireland, in 521, Columba's baptismal name was Colum, which, signifying a dove, gave rise to the Latinized form Columba. In Scotland the name again assumed another form in Colmekill, the suffix meaning cell or chapel. Landing in Iona, some thirty years before Pope Gregory sent St. Augustine to convert the Anglo-

Saxons, he began to plant the Catholic Faith, as well as civilization in northern Scotland and the neighboring islands. The monasteries that he and his twelve fellow-monks established in Iona, became famous over the whole world, and for several centuries attracted many devotees of rank. The island came to be considered holy ground, and monarchs selected it for their burial place; in fact, there all the kings of Scotland from Kenneth III. to Macbeth inclusive were entombed. Though the island was several times laid waste by the Danes and pirates, its monasteries survived in high reputation till the year 1560, when they were destroyed by Reformers acting under orders of the "anti-Popish Synod of Argyll." They burnt all the books and records they could find, broke open the tombs, and carried away or threw into the sea all but two of the three hundred and fifty sculptured stone crosses. Among the ruined monuments in the cemetery are seen today three rows of tombs, forty-eight in all, which tradition says are those of Scottish, Irish, and Norwegian kings. Among them are numbered the tombs of Duncan and Macbeth.

The thane of Cawdor would no doubt have joined the funeral cortege on its way to Colmekill, and have studiously surpassed other nobles in the manifestation of his grief at the grave of his murdered cousin, but the evident suspicion of the nobles having engendered fear of opposition, he foresaw that he must act on the instant. Delay would allow hostile elements to gather strength and thwart his ambition. Hence, consigning the obsequies of Duncan to the care of royal officials, he with his adherents hastened to Scone, where, proclaimed king and crowned according to the laws of Scotland, he could at once gather about him a military force sufficient to crush any insurrection against his newly acquired kingship (ll. 1-41).

## ACT THIRD

### SCENE FIRST

#### BANQUO'S SECRET HOPES

The progressive action in *Macbeth*, which of all Shakespeare's dramas resembles most the classic tragedy, attains its climax or crisis in the middle or third act, when the hero, having reached the summit of unbroken success, enters by unbroken failure upon a rapid course downward. Having grasped the crown, Macbeth is not satisfied therewith, and proceeds to remove without delay the one obstacle that, in the person of Banquo and of Fleance, seems to threaten his security upon the throne. He recognizes in his coronation the verification of the Weird Sisters' prediction in his own regard, and now takes steps to frustrate their promise to Banquo, and by his fatuous action lays the foundation of his own ruin.

The scene opens as Banquo enters engrossed in secret thoughts, which find expression in an earnest soliloquy. From the thought that Macbeth has "played most foully for" the crown, he turns to consider the Weird Sisters' promise to himself. Since their oracles are verified in Macbeth "with all the lustre of conspicuous truth," why should not their further prophecy of his being the root and father of many kings be accepted as true, and, as a consequence, strengthen his growing hopes? The flow of his secret thoughts is quickly checked by the sound of the sennet, which announces the approach of the royal party. The soliloquy, though brief, gives evidence of the moral change which has been wrought in Banquo since the first appearance of the Weird Sisters. Then he scorned them and "neither begged nor feared their favor nor their hate"; then in moral wisdom, flashed in words of shining truth, he cautioned the thane of Cawdor against

the malignant design of his evil tempters. Though dominated less by ambition than Macbeth, Banquo, by frequent brooding over the Weird Sisters' promise of his greatness, was led by degrees to wish it might prove true. As his hopes could enjoy fruition only by Duncan's removal and Macbeth's succession to the throne, he resolved to do nothing that might interfere with the future greatness of his line, either by aiding Duncan or opposing Macbeth. His inaction and his secrecy concerning the prophecies of the Weird Sisters were in accordance with their wish and aided their project. They had slowly influenced his better nature for the worse, as is evidenced, when on the night of the murder he failed to save Duncan by at least some veiled hint of suspected danger; and when in the present soliloquy he frankly accepts the issue of the crime as beneficial to himself; and joins his lot with that of the strongly suspected murderer and usurper (ll. 1-10).

Banquo's soliloquy is interrupted by formal notes of the trumpet, which announce the approach of the newly crowned king and queen with attendant lords and ladies. The royal pair in turn extend to Banquo a formal and yet a flattering welcome. He is specially urged to grace, as chief guest, the high festival to be held that same night in honor of the coronation. Banquo in reply expresses, regardless of suspicions and scruples, his acceptance of Macbeth's kingship, and professes himself "forever knit" to him "by a most indissoluble tie." The full force of his words are clear only to Macbeth; he alone knows of the joint prophecy of the Weird Sisters concerning his own and Banquo's greatness. The latter seeing one part verified in Macbeth, now fully believes and hopes that the other will come true in relation to himself, and accordingly professes his own fortunes to be "forever knit" with Macbeth's. Banquo's hopes, however, are not greater than Macbeth's fears. The latter distrusts the former's flattering words of loyalty. He remembers Banquo's unbroken reserve, his cold indifference to proffered honors, his expressed determination to keep "his bosom franchised and his allegiance clear," and, furthermore, his late hostile

declaration, when before himself and the suspecting nobles, he exclaimed in passionate words:

“Let us meet  
And question this most bloody piece of work,  
To know it further. Fears and scruples shake us:  
In the great hand of God I stand: and thence  
Against the undivulged pretence I fight  
Of treasonous malice.”

These words, because of Banquo's secret knowledge, had for Macbeth a deeper significance than the nobles could divine; to him they clearly breathed a hostile spirit of menace and defiance. He fears, moreover, that the promise made by the Weird Sisters may stir him to imitate his own conspiracy against Duncan. Hence, deeming Banquo's words of loyalty a mockery, he sees in his intended hurried ride some connection with a plot against himself, and, in consequence, eagerly inquires concerning its distance, term, and purpose; and the more Banquo in a natural secretiveness parries his questions, the more Macbeth feels his suspicions confirmed. Unable to conceal the thought that ever plagues his mind—his uncertain tenure of the crown—he next refers to the “strange inventions” with which the “cruel parricides, Malcolm and Donalbain, fill their hearers in England and in Ireland.” Interrupted in the dangerous topic by some one, presumably his wife, he hurriedly bids Banquo adieu, and dismissing court on the pretext that separation till eventide will make their reunion at the banquet all the sweeter, he artfully gains time to perfect his conspiracy with the murderers of Banquo (ll. 11-47).

### CHALLENGES FATE

The court dismissed, Macbeth, again alone, is free to soliloquize upon the causes of his mental agitation and harassed feelings. Though crowned, he is filled with fear and alarm. His evil tempters had inflamed his criminal ambition by picturing the kingship as synonymous with power and happiness: but to his surprise and chagrin the crown seems

to have turned to nothing in his grasp. Though his ruling passion has been gratified by the possession of his one supreme ambition, he experiences naught but unhappiness in the fears and anxieties that "put rancour in the vessel" of his peace. Conscious of the resentment and indignation that his crime must necessarily arouse, suspicion and distrust continually torment him, destroy his confidence in fellow-men, and place him beyond the pale of friendship. To be king, he affirms, is nothing unless he can wear his honors in peace and security. His fear and anxiety are centered most in Banquo, whose loyalty of heart and unswerving rectitude of purpose he deems an endless menace to his peace. Moreover, the superior courage of the man, which, guided by wisdom, enables him to "dare much in safety," silently overawes and rebukes his genius. The term genius usually denotes in Shakespeare the higher rational element in man, that is his spiritual and immortal soul, which rules and controls his material or inferior nature, and which, by directing his lower powers as instruments to its own purpose, determines man's character and fate. The genius of Macbeth is manifest in his aspiring lawless spirit which drives him on inflamed with an insatiable and guilty ambition.

In the text, the term *Genius* seems to bear, besides its common meaning, another and objective sense. Modern poets in imitation of the pagan, often employ the word as an objective concept, which brings it in close relation with the Greek demon or the Roman genius of mythology. According to ancient popular belief, a genius was a higher power which determined a man's character, tried to influence his destiny for good, accompanied him through life as his tutelary spirit, and lived on in the Lares after his death. Men swore by their Genius as by their higher self. In addition to this popular belief was another common to pagan philosophers: that each man had two genii, a good and a bad one.<sup>1</sup> The idea may have been borrowed from divine revelation, as learned from the Sacred Books of Jewish exiles or colonists in pagan lands. The Bible commonly predicates a distinction

1. Cf. Classical Literature and Antiquities, Harpers, p. 720.

between good and bad angels, as between two opposing principles of good and evil. The conflict, however, which is waged is not indeed between themselves, but between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of the evil one on earth. This idea of two spiritual kingdoms is clearly established in the New Testament. The devil is a fallen angel, who in his fall has drawn multitudes in his train. He is termed the prince of this world as it is opposed to God, and tempts the human race with the view of involving it in his own fall and ruin. This thought in mind, the Genius of the text is evidently the evil spirit, or tempter that dominated Macbeth, and whom in himself he feels rebuked by the honest loyalty and moral rectitude of Banquo. In alliance with this evil Genius are kindred evil spirits, and he recalls how Banquo "chid" them when in the guise of the Weird Sisters they first hailed him king.

From the thought of Banquo's hostility, Macbeth passes to another, which arouses intense jealousy. The principle of his torture is the reflection that Fate, while awarding him a "fruitless crown and a barren scepter," has decreed Banquo's issue to succeed him in the kingdom. The thought engenders an oppressive fear lest Banquo, inflamed by ambition like himself, may attempt to seize the crown by violence. Jealousy, which rankles in his heart, enkindles fierce thoughts and a sense of supreme irritation. His foolhardiness is before him. Has he defiled himself by the murder of the "gracious Duncan," filled his life with "rancours," and forfeited his immortal soul to Satan, only to make "the seed of Banquo kings?" No, it shall not be so! Let Fate decree the throne to Banquo, if she will; he will enter the lists against her; challenge her to combat; and fight to the last, no matter what the consequences. His whole being is tortured by the glowing fires of an intense jealousy, which, shutting out all thought of despair, blindly impels him to war against Fate in the foolish hope that by the destruction of his enemies he may yet win security and happiness upon the throne. Aman of old was happy in the enjoyment of supreme wealth and power till a stranger crossing his path, wounded his pride and so

embittered his life that he felt it no longer worth the living, until he should have avenged himself on the luckless Mordochai. So it was with Macbeth. Having acquired the coveted crown, he might have reigned in peace and happiness had not fear and jealousy inspired him to murder Banquo. That crime was the beginning of his own undoing (ll. 47-71)

### A CONSPIRACY

The murderers in the present scene are supposed to be no common villains or assassins, but soldiers whose fortunes have been blighted by Macbeth. The injustice of which they complain indicates that the thane of Cawdor had lapsed in honesty and moral rectitude, even before the temptation of the Weird Sisters. Recalling a former conference with the soldiers, Macbeth reminds them that the conclusion then established was that Banquo, and not he, was the ruin of their fortunes. This conclusion, he affirms, was based on facts, which when exposed in detail, made it evident that Banquo after rousing them to fair expectations, had continued to flatter and delude them with hopes and promises which he had no intention of fulfilling.

Having forced upon the murderers the belief that Banquo, in using them as mere tools to further his own selfish interests, had been guilty of dishonor and injustice, he next proceeds with marked skill to play upon their feelings. An appeal to manhood was always an argument most powerful with himself, and he cunningly employs it to awaken and to energize in them the spirit of revenge. As men, their nature should be aflame with resentment at their sense of wrongs; but as Christians, they have perhaps schooled themselves to patience, mindful of the precept: "Love your enemies. Do good to them that hate you; and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you."<sup>1</sup> Must he believe that, notwithstanding their just feelings of revenge, they shall bow their head to earth and pray for good Banquo, who has basely and forever beggared them and theirs? Checking his glowing

1. Matth. 5:44.

words, he pauses, anxiously awaiting their effect, all the while his questioning fiery eyes riveted upon them. They divine his thoughts and wishes, and acquiesce, protesting themselves merely men. To incite them further, he pretends to doubt their claim. There are men and men; all of whatever quality are catalogued alike, as are curs, thoroughbreds, and mongrels of high and low degree. If, however, in the valued file that distinguishes the noble from the base, they are listed as of honorable manhood, and so dare do all that may become a man, he will entrust them with an affair which, while avenging their wrongs, will also bind them to himself with bonds of love. They protest themselves such honorable men, men, moreover, so wearied and incensed by the vile blows and buffets of the world that they are ready to stake their life on any chance that may bring either betterment or forfeiture.

Macbeth's anxiety to rid himself of Banquo clouds his judgment and leads him imprudently to inform the murderers in confidence of the reasons of his conduct, a confidence they may easily betray. They learn why for weighty reasons "the business" must be masked "from the common eye," and further that, throughout the whole affair, they must be mindful of keeping him absolutely free from suspicion. As the soldiers depart, resolved upon the crime at the appointed time and place, Macbeth, rejoicing in his cunning, exclaims in high exaltation of assured success, "Banquo, thy soul's flight, if it find heaven, must find it out tonight." His words, it is thought, contain an ironic and sneering allusion to the honesty of the man whose honorable and loyal bearing have been so strongly marked in contrast with his own. The scene discloses the progress of Macbeth in the path of crime. Projects of murder no longer stir him to a sense of compunction. Completely in the power of evil spirits—his tempters—his conscience is now seared, and abandoned to unblushing villainy (ll. 72-144).

## SCENE SECOND

### GLOOM AND MELANCHOLY

The last scene revealed Macbeth's fear and jealousy of Banquo; the present, in turn discloses the effect of the crime on Lady Macbeth. We see her enter in melancholy mien and hear her sad, solemn voice, which is uninspired by any sentiment of joy or of gratified ambition. Her new affliction, unforeseen as a consequence of her crime, has broken down her towering pride, sapped the vigor of her iron will, and left her altogether dispirited. Having heard her husband's eager inquiries concerning Banquo's movements and observed his strange conduct, she fears lest he plan some covert guile against him. This suspicion augments her unhappiness and unrest, and impels her to despatch a servant to summon her husband for a brief interview.

At the servant's exit, she is free to vent the afflicting thoughts and sentiments that rack her heart and soul. They disclose her changed position in the drama. When before the murder, Macbeth faltered from the dread of unforeseen, fatal consequences, she was the principal and the force that impelled his faltering footsteps onward; but the murder once done, he disregards her, and seizing the mastery of affairs, enters without hesitation upon the perpetration of new crimes. She, on the contrary, dazzled by the diadem, was blind to the consequences of the crime; but after the bloody deed, an awakened conscience excited her imagination to conjure up those unforeseen horrors which now desolate and harrow her mind.

Her isolation increases her unhappiness. Though her brow be adorned with the "golden round," and her form be enfolded in queenly robes, she feels herself immersed in misery. The prize that she coveted is indeed in her grasp, but with it comes remorseless suffering. In the midst of an assumed gayety, she sighs in troubled spirit, and exclaims in a settled melancholy, "Nought's had, all's spent." Her words and sighs are confessions of her error. Like many a mortal, she had been deceived into placing her supreme good

in a false object, and having sacrificed her immortal soul for its attainment, finds its possession productive of naught but remorse and misery and despair. "The worm that never dies is already gnawing at her heart"; and "the peace that surpasseth all understanding" is lost to her forever. Her present words indicate a mental anguish and unrest, which fed, day after day, by images and thoughts that will not die, shall culminate in the agony of those terrible sleep-walking nights.

As her husband enters, Lady Macbeth attempts to rally her shattered forces, and with her former perfect self-control to resume her accustomed fortitude. She desires above all to conceal from him the ravages that the pitiless hand of remorse has wrought upon her; but her plaintive words unconsciously betray her a hapless prey to misery and to melancholy. Her mournful words, uttered in tones so full of sadness, reveal her no longer the presumptuous, resolute woman, who before the murder defied in mock courage all the consequences of her crime. Her wretchedness is, furthermore, deepened from the instinctive sense that she has lost her influence as adviser and confidant, and plaintively she chides him for avoiding her society. More bitter, however, is the realization that her love for him and unselfish devotion to his supreme ambition, which had prompted her to urge him to the crime, have brought no fruit, save the severance of their lives and endless wretchedness. Pitiful, indeed, and pathetic is the scene, wherein she is pictured as seeking with unselfish affection to comfort him, all the while hiding the bleeding wound of her own lacerated heart.

This sensibility, this tenderness and sympathy reveal, for the first time, a new trait in her character, and disclose that beneath her brazen bravado still slumbered a true feminine nature. In her love and misery, she yearns for his companionship, even though it be as miserable as her own. She divines from her own affliction the torture he is suffering, and if she can not alleviate it, she may at least share therein, and in gratitude for his love commiserate and support him against anxieties and fears. The remedy, however, which she suggests for his overwrought and diseased mind, is hopeless

and indicates her fatalistic tendencies. There is no thought of sorrow, nor of repentance and reparation of the wrong; no thought of religion and the balm that it alone can bring to compunctious hearts. Having long rejected the moral principles of religion, the sole solace that she seeks is the barren philosophy of fatalism, which can only prompt the despairing cry that their misery is "without all remedy."

Lady Macbeth mistakes the nature of her husband's mental agitation. If her misery is due to a remorseful conscience, his arises from the same fears which caused him to falter before the murder. His words indicate that he suffers solely from fears of the consequences of his crime, and not from pangs of conscience or sense of moral guilt. Having already sacrificed his eternal interests for the crown, he is now wholly concerned with the present life; hence, rejecting all thought of guilt, he concentrates his mind on the fears that haunt his waking hours by day, and afflict his restless nights with terrible dreams of detection and retribution. The inward fires of his guilt rouse his faculties to rebellion at the thought that, after sacrificing his eternal weal for supreme power, he can not possess it in this temporal life in peace and happiness. His words kindling as they flow, and his imagination lifting him to the heights of defiance, he is ready, in an egotism clothed in fearful form, to dissolve the whole fabric of creation and confound earth and heaven in irremediable confusion, if only he may enjoy undisturbed the fruit of his crimes. Passionate ambition has made him the incarnate principle of selfishness, though affection for his wife seems at times to play over his rugged countenance as lightning over a storm cloud. From the fears and anxieties that torment him, he turns to compare his fate with that of Duncan's. "Better be with the dead" than to lie upon the rack of frenzied restlessness, tortured by those terrible dreams that shake him nightly. Duncan sleeps peacefully in his grave, while he is exposed on every side to steel, poison, domestic malice, and foreign levies in array against his usurpation. Shakespeare's reference to Duncan's sleep is in harmony with his Christian faith. The Materialist may believe

that death annihilates man's soul and body, but the Poet believed like all Christians that the human body is consigned to earth, which from the early days of the Church has been called cemetery, or sleeping ground, because there it shall rest in peaceful slumber until God, in His own good time, shall reunite it with its immortal spirit to enjoy an eternal reward for a life well spent (ll. 1-26).

### A HAUNTING TYRANT OF THE MIND

Lady Macbeth listened with sympathy to her husband's complaint of fear and "terrible dreams that shake him nightly." She still mistook the cause of his sufferings, deeming them to be, like her own, from remorse of conscience. Hence, instead of reproaching him as formerly with contemptuous taunts of moral cowardice, she tries to turn his mind from those "sorriest fancies" to practical thoughts concerning the approaching banquet. Though she counsels him to smooth over his forbidding looks, and to assume a "bright and jovial" air, her words and melancholic tones indicate her own hollow cheerfulness. In reply, Macbeth discloses Banquo to be the haunting tyrant of his mind. The request that he be treated with the highest honors among all the noble guests that night, appears somewhat puzzling; since he was to be slain before the banquet. Macbeth's words, if not ironical, may have been prompted by a cautious fear lest his design should fail, or again, perhaps, by the desire of concealing not only the murderous plot from his wife, but also his own share therein. His excuse for the flattering honors to be shown to Banquo is the instability of their royal honors. Their tenure, he affirms, shall not be secure as long as they depend on honeyed lies of flattery, and on continuous hypocrisy of thoughts and feelings.

This instability he charges to Banquo and his son, whom the Fates have made the scorpions of his mind, and whose painful scourge shall continue with their lives. His fears and mental agitation Lady Macbeth attempts to allay by reminding him that "in them nature's copy is not eterne."

Her words have been sometimes understood to suggest Banquo's murder, but the contrary appears from the text. The words, it is true, as seen from Macbeth's reply, "There is comfort yet, they are assailable," were the occasion of recalling to his mind the murderous plot. But as he boasts of "the deed of dreadful note" to be done that very night, his wife, not understanding the import of the hint, is bewildered and asks in alarm, "What's to be done?" Macbeth, however, declines to illumine her by further confidence. His evasion of the question indicates not only that he wished her to remain in ignorance of the contemplated crime, but, furthermore, that he had not even understood her words to suggest Banquo's murder. Observing her deeply depressed spirits, he feels instinctively that she would oppose the second murder. She had urged him on to the first, because it was necessary for the attainment of the crown; but she might decry his new project as foolhardy and unnecessary; since the Fates had decreed the throne not to Banquo, but his heirs, and Fleance was still a mere boy. Hence, his purpose seems nothing more than to excite suspicion of his project. While the full knowledge of the intended murder might further deepen her melancholy, a mere suspicion would tend to lessen the consequent shock. Moreover, he has no need of her assistance. Having obtained the crown by blood, he has firmly resolved to maintain it by further blood, and now exulting, as a man of action, in the very thought of the murder, he assumes she will applaud the deed when done. In glowing fancy he rises on the wings of poesy to apostrophize the night. He summons her to come and to blindfold the sight of pitying day. With unseen and bloody hand let her sunder the bond by which destiny has joined his fate with the house of Banquo and his heirs. Gloating over approaching darkness which shall lull to sleep all good of day, and rouse from their lair the wicked agents that prowl under cover of the blackness of the night, he feels an exaltation of mind inspired by a fevered imagination, and boastingly exclaims: "You marvel at my words, but wait, things bad begun make strong themselves by ill." The thickening twi-

light is the setting in of thick darkness upon his human soul (ll. 26-56).

### SCENE THIRD

#### BANQUO'S TEMPTATION AND FALL

The Poet designs us to witness the murder of Banquo, so as to prepare us for the appearance of his ghost in the scene immediately following. To the first and second murderer we have been already introduced, but the identity of the third is left entirely to conjecture. Some critics think that Macbeth, distrustful of common soldiers or assassins in a project so important, sent Ross, his chief confident, to superintend the bloody work. Others say that the third murderer is Macbeth himself; but against this opinion is his surprise at the escape of Fleance, as expressed in the following scene, as well as his words addressed to Banquo's ghost, "Thou canst not say I did it." More probable seems the opinion that the third murderer was a confidential servant of Macbeth. He is not recognized by the other assassins, who are retainers of Banquo, and unlike them, he is well acquainted with all the surroundings of the palace (ll. 1-22).

Banquo falls from lack of foresight and want of action in a field full of dangers. To him, certain critics are accustomed to attribute such honesty of purpose as withstood the infernal suggestions to which Macbeth succumbed. A careful study will, however, disclose that his honesty, which, indeed, is evident at his meeting with the Weird Sisters, slowly weakens with the progress of the drama, until, like Macbeth, though in a less degree, he falls a victim to the wiles of the evil tempters. Though suspecting the Weird Sisters to be the visible forms of wicked spirits, he yields to curiosity and challenges them to prophesy his destiny. To their oracles, which link his fate with Macbeth's, his natural honesty gives little heed; but noting from the thane's strange action how he had fallen under their evil spell, his sole thought is to warn him against their evil purpose. Later at the verification of the first prediction, he wonders that the devil can speak

truth. From that moment, maintaining strict secrecy, he daily broods over the prophecies and, as he sees them one after another verified in relation to Macbeth, his faith in the truthfulness of the oracle concerning himself also increased, until he comes to desire and even to expect its fulfilment. For this, secrecy was absolutely necessary; to disclose the prophecies was to frustrate their verification. Their very nature, it was clear, called for silence, and, in consequence, no formal injunction was needed, either in the case of Macbeth or in that of Banquo. The oracle concerning the latter was so linked with that of the former that the verification of the one depended, as a consequence, upon the verification of the other. Action was not called for. The policy implicitly enjoined was to say nothing, to do nothing, but only to await developments. Having come to believe in the oracles of the Weird Sisters, Banquo concluded that Macbeth must first attain the kingship before the promise which was made to him could be verified in the succession of his children to the crown. Hence, he faithfully maintained silence, as the Weird Sisters had implicitly enjoined, and by this silence enabled the evil tempters to bring destruction upon himself and Macbeth. Such method of temptation is common to wicked spirits, as has been noted by St. Ignatius of Loyola in his rules for the discernment of spirits: "One of his wiles is when like some Seducer he (Satan) attacks us covertly plotting our ruin. It is thus that an evil-disposed lover tries to allure the victim of his passion from the home of a good father, or a wife from her husband, binding her to secrecy and silence regarding his plans, for fear lest his design be defeated. In like manner, the devil tries to dissuade and prevent us from betraying his wicked and malicious deceits to our confessor or director knowing that otherwise he is sure to be frustrated in his object."

The temptation of Banquo reached its crisis on the night of Duncan's murder. The terrible suspicions which then roused him from troubled dreams and left him on waking a prey to bloody thoughts, were surely heightened when, after all had retired, he met the thane prowling about myste-

riously in darkness, and noted his wild looks and intense and unnatural agitation. In that mental conflict, his sense of duty was pitted against a continuance of his policy of silent inactivity. It was contrary to the obligations which bound him as an honest man, a loyal subject, and an honorable nobleman; and these obligations in their combined force urged him in the face of such overpowering suspicions and in a crisis so momentous, to awaken the aged and confiding Duncan from treacherous security. Little, indeed, was required to save the king from the treachery suspected. There was no need of revealing the secret oracles. No need of incriminating Macbeth in person; but merely of awakening Duncan, and of warning him of strong suspicions in a general way; or failing in this, to loiter near the chamber till the danger had passed. But, strange to say, notwithstanding the sense of duty and of obligations which conscience urges upon him, Banquo does nothing by word or act to thwart the suspected purpose of Macbeth. On the contrary, repressing the impulses of his better nature, he seeks reasons in support of his inaction and his innocence; for, laboring to persuade himself of all absence of danger and of the rashness of the foul suspicions which are overmastering his mind, he ceaselessly and earnestly attempts to banish them as "cursed thoughts," and even prays to heaven against them. Thus influenced more by the prophetic promise than by rectitude of conscience, he falls in the struggle and, ensnared by the evil tempters, resolves to remain silent and inactive, just as the Weird Sisters had hoped and desired. That Banquo had finally fallen beneath the spell of evil spirits is further manifested by rapid downward steps after the crime. When Macduff and other nobles had discovered Duncan's murder and stood aghast in horror and bewilderment, Banquo felt impelled to exclaim in vehemence of spirit:

"Let us meet  
And question this most bloody piece of work,  
To know it further. Fears and scruples shake us:  
In the great hand of God I stand, and thence

Against the undivulg'd pretence I fight  
Of treasonous malice."

These words inspired, perhaps, by the stings of conscience and the desire of proclaiming his own innocence, remained, however, vain and fruitless; as "fears and scruples" concerning "treasonous malice" had not swayed him to action before the "bloody piece of work," so neither do they after, notwithstanding his solemn oath to heaven. Moreover, a few hours later, in mind exalted by glowing hopes, he voices his inmost secret thoughts in a heated soliloquy: Now that Macbeth is "king, Cawdor, Glamis, all," why should not he himself fondly cherish expectations based on the same "verities"?

"Thou hast it now: king, Cawdor, Glamis, all,  
As the weird women promis'd, and, I fear,  
Thou play'dst most foully for 't: yet it was said  
It should not stand in thy posterity,  
But that myself should be the root and father  
Of many kings. If there come truth from them,  
As upon thee, Macbeth, their speeches shine,  
Why, by the verities on thee made good,  
May they not be my oracles as well,  
And set me up in hope? But hush! No more."

This soliloquy discloses Banquo's well-founded opinion that Macbeth "played most foully for" the crown, and, moreover, his own anxious readiness to profit by the usurper's crime. Furthermore, a few moments later he publicly professes before the court his allegiance to the crowned criminal:

BANQUO. "Let your highness  
Command upon me; to the which my duties  
Are with a most indissoluble tie  
Forever knit."

That "indissoluble tie" is the prophetic promise which, having overmastered his thoughts and affections, had robbed him of his former righteousness. His hopes are indissolubly

bound up with Macbeth's, and to further them he neither hesitates to profit by the murder, nor to commit an act of treason by recognizing the crowned but bloody interloper and openly espousing his cause. Thus Banquo, once an honest and honorable man, was by degrees enmeshed in the snare of the Weird Sisters and, guilty of silent connivance at treason, fell a victim to the wiles and hypocrisy of the criminal with whom he aligned himself against the dictates of conscience.

## SCENE FOURTH

### AN UNWELCOME GUEST

Before us opens a great hall, wherein a banquet is prepared in honor of the coronation. With a blare of trumpets, Macbeth and lady, followed by a large retinue of lords and ladies, enter, arrayed in all the insignia of royalty. Inviting all to seat themselves according to their rank, he tenders them from first to last a hearty welcome. Lady Macbeth in her wonted self-control assumes at once her place of state; but her husband, in expectation of momentary news of Banquo's murder, labors with difficulty to conceal his mental strain by moving restlessly about among his guests. Professing to play "the humble host," he exhorts all to "be large in mirth" and, as he proposes to drink a measure to "the table round," he catches a glimpse of the *First Murderer* standing at the door. The sight stays his purpose, and he suddenly withdraws to dismiss the intruder before pledging the measure to his guests. At the curtained door, all unseen by the banqueters, he greets in excited words the glad tidings of the mysterious visitor and, noting his bloody countenance, exclaims nervously that it is better for him to be without the banquet hall than for Banquo to be within as a guest. His sense of joy is, however, blighted by the news of Fleance's escape. He destroyed, his kingship would be clear as flawless marble, and as firm as a basic rock; but Fleance alive, he feels himself a prisoner enchained and tortured by relentless doubts and fears. Though the grown serpent lies dead, his

progeny, now young, will in time breed a venom that will poison his otherwise assured hopes. Dismissing the murderer till another meeting on the morrow, Macbeth hastens back to his guests (ll. 1-37).

On hastening back to the banqueters, Macbeth is chided by his wife. His strange absence spoils the banquet; his failure to cheer and welcome the guests in person robs it of its worth. As he begins to reply with the words, "Sweet remembrancer," his evil tempters present the specter of Banquo, which, invisible to the guests, sits in the thane's vacant place. That the apparition is designed by the Poet to be real, and not imaginary, is evident from the stage direction and the fact that from Shakespeare's time it was the unvarying custom for the specter to enter with gory head and, gazing at Macbeth, to indicate by gesture his gashed and bleeding throat.

This long-honored custom was deviated from in the course of time by an innovation which, though partly prompted by the ambition of famous actors, was in the main due to the growth and spread of materialistic tendencies. Ambitious tragedians, in the presumption of extraordinary histrionic powers, hoped in banishing the specter, to be able so to work upon the imagination of the audience as to create the requisite illusion, as well as that terrible situation which the actual appearance of the apparition would naturally produce. In Shakespeare's day, when the Christian religion, which teaches the existence of the preternatural and of spirits both good and evil, was widespread among the masses, the advent of ghosts upon the stage was considered a matter of course; but at the close of the eighteenth century, when Materialism, which denies the existence of the preternatural and of all spiritual or immaterial beings, was beginning to exercise a contrary influence, Kemble was the first to introduce the innovation of making the specter imaginary instead of real. That his example should have been followed by Edwin Booth and by Irving in their later years is not surprising, when we reflect that Materialism is more widespread in our times and that the theater, too often degenerated and commercial-

ized, is dominated by managers and promoters whose spirit, as shown by their plays, is, to say the least, not impressively Christian. Against Kemble's innovation, Edwin Forrest, Edmund Kean, Edward Davenport, Barry Sullivan, George Vanderhoff, and many others have protested. Emulating a long line of tragedians, they have by a faithful and persistent adherence to the ancient custom, declared against any departure from Shakespeare's purpose and direction.

That theirs is the saner practice needs little argument. Whatever be the idiosyncrasy of a manager, or the ambition of a tragedian, neither should be allowed to mar the work of a master dramatist. Christianity, moreover, still predominates and should not be ignored in the representation of the plays of an artist whose mind was strongly imbued with its principles. The departure from the ancient custom is, affirms Campbell,<sup>1</sup> a pernicious practice. No rational motive can be adduced for depriving spectators of a sight of Banquo's ghost. The company at the banquet, it is true, are not supposed to see the apparition, nor do they yet know of Banquo's murder; but the spectator knows it, and he is no more a member of that company than he is of the scene shifters. On the contrary, he is the Poet's invited guest, invited to see Macbeth as he portrays him, and to see what he sees, and to feel what he feels. The fact that the ghost is invisible to the banqueters is surely no reason why he should also be invisible to the audience; for there is a universal belief that specters are privileged to make themselves visible to those only to whom they will. Moreover, as Banquo's name is not mentioned, there is a pressing need for the presence of his ghost; without it, the audience is left in doubt whether it is Duncan's or Banquo's spirit; without it, the spectator can not at once understand the meaning of what he sees and hears; without it, he can not comprehend the full significance of Macbeth's terrified and bewildered words and action. Hence, Banquo's ghost, by Shakespeare's own direction, was not the mental fiction of a guilty conscience, but, like the spectral dagger, objective and the pre-

1. Life of Mrs. Siddons.

ternatural work of evil spirits, who, to betray Macbeth and to confirm growing suspicions, present the specter of his victim. Later, by other apparitions, they shall lure him on to further crime.

### SELF-BETRAYAL

Macbeth's restlessness and manifest excitement when again in the midst of his guests, prompt Lennox to urge him to take his appointed seat at the banquet. A sense of guilt, however, together with a desire to conceal his latest crime, masters his thoughts and impels him to hide his emotions behind hypocritical utterances. While professing to regret the absence of his most honored guest, he prefers to ascribe it to unkindness rather than to some mischance or accident. The irony of his words is heightened to the full by the actual presence of Banquo's specter, yet unobserved by Macbeth. After a second pressing invitation, he turns to take his seat, but is amazed to find it filled. He gazes wildly about to the surprise of all, who see but an empty chair. Recognizing at a second glance the bloody specter, he is seized with sudden horror, and recoils in terror, exclaiming the while, in his role of hypocrisy, "Which of you have done this?" Though a master of dissimulation, he, nevertheless, breaks down under the strain of the unexpected and terrible situation.

As Shakespeare wrote his tragedies for action, it is difficult in the mere reading to appreciate the supreme horror under which Macbeth struggles at the sight of Banquo's apparition in that hall, imperfectly illuminated by the fitful flare of torches. If he had thought himself, at length, secure upon the throne, the accusing specter of his bleeding victim now undeceives him and overwhelms him with astonishment and terror. He could reason away the air-drawn dagger, but in the agitation and terror which unman him, he feels enthralled by the uncontrolled horror of the culprit who faces unexpectedly the actual ghost of the man he had secretly murdered. Blanched and trembling from fear, and assuming that all like himself see the ghost, he points at the dreadful specter, as in a low broken voice he protests his

innocence. "Thou canst not say I did it: never shake thy gory locks at me." His astounding words and action throw the whole assembly in disorder; and all rise in dismay, as Ross offers illness as the cause of Macbeth's surprising conduct.

Lady Macbeth sat in silence through the scene, intently observing her husband's mental agitation. She can not see the specter, and ignorant of Banquo's murder, she naturally assumes that the invisible object which Macbeth addresses is Duncan's ghost. No less dismayed than the nobles at her husband's wild disorder, she rises hastily from her stately seat, and anxious to allay suspicion, mingles among the guests, calming them, and insisting that they continue the banquet regardless of her husband, whose affliction is only the result of a momentary fit. From the guests, she turns to her husband and in suppressed anguish, lest he further betray his guilt, she draws him aside and struggles to encourage and sustain him. To break the spell of appalling terrors in which an overwrought imagination holds him she seeks, as on former occasions, to steel his spirits by her own. Approaching and taking him by the hand, she appeals to him in a suppressed contemptuous voice, "Are you a man?" Her own overmastering influence has, however, waned, and her challenge of his valorous manhood is met only with Macbeth's admission of dread and horror.

Her words prove ineffectual. But Lady Macbeth, though highly irritated, retains her characteristic self-control and, in the full mastery of her faculties, continues the battle to maintain appearances, both in her own and her husband's regard. Now changing tactics and seeking by stinging words of ridicule and contempt to shame him into self-command, she insists in angry but suppressed voice that his wild words are absolute nonsense. His mad gaping in fear and horror at an empty stool, and his sudden outbursts of passion at imaginary fears that are mere "impostures" like the air-drawn dagger, are a shame and disgrace to reason and to manhood.

She finds her strenuous rebukes unavailing. Her old-time resources would, no doubt, have been effectual had

Macbeth's frenzied action been the mere result of a disordered imagination; but so convinced is he of the reality of the specter, of the actual presence of the accusing ghost of his murdered victim, that her efforts to calm him and to allay his fears by charging his agitation to an excited fancy, only rouse him the more to protest the reality of the ghost; and turning to his wife, while pointing at the specter, he exclaims in continued terror and excitement, "Prithee, see there! look! how say you?" Can you deny its presence? With the disappearance of the ghost, Macbeth, still excited, gives utterance to damaging allusions. He emphasizes the strangeness of the fact that in olden times murder was the end of men, but now, even though they bear "twenty mortal murders on their crowns," they return from the grave to plague us.

Lady Macbeth, still laboring to pacify her husband, and seeing the inutility of her former methods, resorts to a new expedient. Hitherto, she had addressed him only aside and in whispered accents, but now, assuming a calm and ordinary tone of voice, she speaks aloud to him and the whole assembly. Her words at once recall Macbeth to himself, and awaken him to a sense of the dangerous situation. Catching their meaning, he turns to the dazed and gaping nobles, and attempts to disarm their suspicions by an artifice that had perhaps been previously agreed upon; namely, of assigning his distraction and wild agitation to a strange but passing malady, well known to his familiars (ll. 37-88).

### A SECOND VISIT

Alarmed at the confusion of his guests and their suspicious whisperings, Macbeth hastens to explain away his fears and terrors, and as a further aid he calls for wine, and in mock mirth drinks to the common joy of all his guests. Oppressed, however, by the sense of guilt, and eager to thwart suspicions, he exhorts all to good cheer, regrets the absence of "his dear friend Banquo," whose presence he sorely misses; for to him, as to all, he wishes every good and longs to drink his health. In response, the nobles rise with goblets in hand to pledge

their sentiments of loyalty and duty. Macbeth's hypocritical wish is at once answered; for his evil tempters again present Banquo's specter in response to his expressed longing for the presence of his dear, absent friend.

Though the ghost that appears first in the present scene is, beyond doubt, that of Banquo, the second is thought by certain critics to be Duncan's. Such an opinion, says Collier, "seems one of those conjectures in which original minds indulge, rather than a criticism founded upon a correct interpretation of the text." It is evident that Macbeth, solely preoccupied with Banquo's murder, only thinks and speaks of him, and hence, it is dramatically proper that, when in a spirit of bravado he seeks to ward off suspicion by complimenting his dear, absent friend and by anxiously desiring his presence, the ghost should reappear in response to his earnest wish. Moreover, his address to the ghost, "Dare me to the desert with thy sword," while inappropriate to the meek and venerable Duncan, is proper to the ghost of a fellow-soldier. Furthermore, since Shakespeare's stage directions were for the guidance of the actors, it is clear that when he wrote, "reënter the ghost," he meant the ghost of Banquo. Had he intended the specter of the murdered king to enter, he would have so stated; since Duncan's form and not Banquo's was then to be presented. All doubt on the subject seems banished by Dr. Forman, who, as an eye-witness of the tragedy as enacted in Shakespeare's day, in his own theater, and under his personal direction, has left the following description in his *Diary*: "Being at supper with his noble men, whom he had bid to a feast, to which also Banquo should have come, he began to speak of Noble Banquo, and to wish that he were there. And as he thus did, standing up to drink a earouse to him, the ghost of Banquo came and sat down in his chair behind him. And he, turning about to sit down again, saw the ghost of Banquo, which fronted him so that he fell into a great passion of fear and fury."

In the fitful glare of the torches, Macbeth beholds the ghastly eyes of the bleeding specter, staring fixedly and terribly upon him. Staggering back in surprise and dread from

an almost personal contact, he quails more than ever, and, in mind and senses overpowered, cries out in guilty fear and horror, "Avaunt! and quit my sight!" Let the grave cover thee! Thy form is lifeless! thou hast no intellectual vision in those eyes with which thou dost glare upon me! The sensible horror and mental terror, which overmaster him, are irresistibly reflected upon his countenance, exposed by the tremor of his body, and reëchoed in his every quavering word. In the meanwhile, Lady Macbeth, having returned to her royal seat, was attempting in fearful misgivings to maintain her composure. When, however, at the reappearance of the ghost, Macbeth in a new and greater agitation suddenly shrinks back from an empty stool, and, pointing in affright and horror at some invisible object, addresses it in appalling words of terror, she is almost overcome with fear and anxiety. Observing in dismay the disorder and troubled mien of the guests, she overtakes her strained energies as with artful smiles and artificial graciousness she seeks to distract attention from her husband to herself. Though afflicted in soul and roused to anger by his self-betraying indiscreetness, she feels her inability to quiet his overwrought imagination, and, repressing her impatience, as well as her natural impulse to chastise him with her tongue, she turns her whole attention to minimizing the compromising effect of his words and action upon the guests. As a means, she assures them that his astounding conduct is a "thing of custom," the consequence of "a strange infirmity." Macbeth, however, still overawed and in tremulous apprehension, is actually oblivious of all save the torturing gaze of his victim. In excuse and palliation of the irresistible horror and trepidation, which unman him, he appeals to his well-tried valor and boasts his fearlessness to face the specter under any other form, whether that of "the rugged Russian bear," or the "armed rhinoceros," or "the Hyrcan tiger," or if in trembling fear he fail to meet him returned to life again, let men protest him a babyish girl.

His frenzied challenge, uttered, not in the full voice of mad passion growing in climax of sound, but in trembling tones that gradually melt away into whispered gutturals,

discloses his futile struggle to assert self-control while overcome by fear and mental terror. His address to the ghost, nevertheless, closes with a final flash of courage. Summoning all his physical and mental energies, he waves away the horrid specter with wild repelling gesture, while exclaiming in heightened tragic tones, "Hence, horrible shadow! Unreal mockery, hence!" As the ghost vanishes, Macbeth in wild stare gazes searchingly about the hall. Assured of its absence, he utters a few long, heavy sighs of relief, and with outstretched arms and painfully heaving chest, as one awaking from a horrid nightmare, bewildered and surprised, he aspirates in troubled and half-choking gasps, "Why, so: being gone, I am a man again."

Sufficiently recovered from fright and terror, he becomes again sensible of the presence of the nobles, who had all risen in alarm at his new outbreak. Noting their painful surprise, suspicious mien, and questioning stare, he motions them with assuring tones to resume their seats at the banquet board.

### PANIC-STRICKEN

The guests, overawed and filled with wonder, immediately obey his command. When in anxiety and dismay they beheld him recoiling in fear and terror from an empty chair, and addressing some unseen object in words proper only to a disembodied spirit; when they heard him in affright and terror defy that "horrible shadow," and even challenge it to come back to life and face him in mortal combat, all, though facile courtiers, of loyal looks and cordial manners, were overawed and perplexed, and in apprehension gazed upon him overpowered by appalling dread and terror. Conflicting were their various thoughts. In ignorance of Banquo's murder, they naturally suspected that the apparition, if real and not imaginary, was the ghost of Duncan, and, in consequence, exchanged looks of anxiety and perplexing doubts. All the while Lady Macbeth, despairing of waking her husband from his horrid dream, trembled in agonizing mind, and sat fearing the effect of his tragic words and

action upon the astounded guests. As she sees suspicion reflected on their faces, she yields to anger and, in smothered terror and domineering indignation, reproaches him in scornful tones for disrupting the banquet by such monstrous disorder.

Macbeth, still dazed and puzzled, addresses his reply to all the guests. Great is his amazement that the sight of the bloody specter should affect them no more than a summer's passing cloud. Imagining all to have seen the ghost, he can not understand why, like himself, they should not quake with terror and be blanched with fear. The puzzling fact leads him to doubt his hitherto acknowledged natural bravery and to fancy himself a coward, since on trial he is overcome by those "horrid sights" on which they can gaze unmoved with fearless fortitude. In the interim, Lady Macbeth, writhing in internal agony and casting ever and anon restless and terrifying glances toward Macbeth, labored with exaggerated courtesies to distract and entertain the guests. When, however, his admissions led Ross, his closest adherent, to question him, she rushes from the dais in alarm, lest under question he make other damaging confessions. Waving and, in fact, thrusting Macbeth aside, she confronts the assembly and, in voice almost choked with fear and anxiety, reproves the curiosity of the nobles, and forbids further questions; they will only enrage him and bring a return of his malady. While Macbeth, depressed in spirits, stands speechless, lost in thoughts of Banquo's ghost, of his guilt, and of the public exhibition of his recent terror, Lady Macbeth, panic-stricken, bids the guests good night and, urging their hasty departure, almost drives them away in disorder and dismay (ll. 89-121).

The situation in which, after the hurried and brusque dismissal of the nobles, the King and Queen, at the summit of their ambition and guilty triumph, are left alone in secret with overpowering misery, is, indeed, awe-inspiring, terrible, and pathetic—a scene perhaps unsurpassed in tragedy. Lady Macbeth was capable of immense exertion while the crisis lasted. Her attempts to break her husband's grim spells of horror displayed her characteristic resolution, self-possession,

domineering disposition, and richness of resources; but when, instantly the guests are gone, we expect to hear her chide Macbeth in old-time fashion, she sinks exhausted in a sudden reaction and, dispirited, utters no taunting or reproachful words of anger. The sight of her husband, utterly crushed under mental and physical sufferings, only augments her own silent emotions of misery and remorse; and, though well aware of the real cause of Macduff's absence, she dares not even hint it. Formerly, in strength of will she could ignore and even scoff at fearful consequences, and rail at her husband's horrible imaginings; but, now broken in spirit, she is no longer the stern, dominating, self-willed woman, the harpy that, taunting as cowardice her husband's rational fears of foreseen consequences, urged him on to bloody deeds of violence. Gone is her controlling influence, and in a sense of helplessness, she can only bid him forget his fears in sleep—"the balm of hurt minds." The irony of her words shall be clear when she appears again, only a restless wreck, storm-tossed by evil memories that make her own sleep a torturing mockery.

Macbeth, on the contrary, is stirred by growing fears to resolution and to action. Still haunted in imagination by Banquo's ghost, he is disturbed by the fearful thought that "it will have blood." "Whosoever sheds man's blood, his blood shall be shed: for man was made to the image of God."<sup>1</sup> Agitated by dread of detection, he ruminates in fevered mind upon the universally accepted truth that, notwithstanding most artful schemes of concealment, "murder will out"; in consequence he fears the unmasking of his secret guilt by some strange or unexpected means. In confirmation of his fears he alludes to stones which, covering a corpse, preternaturally moved away, and exposed a secret murder; men moreover, changed into trees, were known to speak and disclose their murderers;<sup>2</sup> unknown or invisible connections between effects and their cause, have by divinations been made so clear as to expose unsuspecting criminals; and jackdaws

1. Gen. 9:6.

2. A reference, perhaps, to Polydorus in Virgil's Aeneid III, 22. The same idea is found in Dante's Inferno, Canto XIII.

have by their chatterings revealed the most "secreted" murderer. From anxious fears his thoughts turn to suspicion of Macduff. His refusal to attend the coronal festivities was tantamount to a public denial of allegiance to himself. In his fears he finds one solace in the fact that he has placed a trusted spy in the household of every thane. Guilty conscience, engendering suspicion and mistrust of his fellow-men, impelled him to resort to treachery, as well as to deeds of blood.

### THE FIRST STEP

The murder of Banquo was the first step in Macbeth's downward course. Had he been satisfied with the crown after Duncan's murder, all might have been well with him. The peaceful possession of the crown was not, however, the prime object of the Weird Sisters' plot. As the visible embodiment of evil spirits, their main purpose was to lead him voluntarily to moral ruin. Hence, having roused his master-passion of ambition, and by crafty predictions induced him to seize the crown by one murder, they next lead him to hope that by another he could hold it in security. The second murder done, they further proceed to shatter his dream by presenting Banquo's specter, and withdrawing it only after he has sufficiently betrayed himself and confirmed suspicions of his guilt. The vanished specter left him overpowered with fear and terror, and agitated by a sense of new dangers and difficulties. The fact that the thanes, hurrying forth from the banquet, had given to winged winds the rumor that he was haunted by Duncan's ghost; the fact that Macduff and other nobles had deserted him, and were likely to lead an armed force in rebellion against him, filled him with anxieties and fears. While in this trepidation of mind, he accepts the suggestion of his evil tempters to rid himself of fears and dangers, regardless of every sentiment of pity and remorse, and for this end to seek their further guidance. Having for the coveted crown, given his eternal jewel to the common enemy of man, he had voluntarily surrendered himself to the power of his demon-tempters; and, now a willing captive,

blind to their nefarious wiles and evil purposes, and trusting in their preternatural foresight and guidance, he finds their suggestion most acceptable and reassuring.

Certain conclusions have been reached by psychological moralists, which are based on long experience and observation. In tempting man, the demon adapts himself to each one's peculiarity of character, to favorite inclinations or passions, and clothes himself, as it were, in our very selves. In those who are making progress in virtue, good and evil spirits act in different ways. The good angel enters into good hearts gently and sweetly, without violence or noise, like drops of water entering a sponge; whereas, the evil spirit enters roughly and violently with a kind of noise, like drops of rain that fall pattering upon a rock. But the very contrary happens in those who are going from good to bad or from bad to worse: and the reason of this difference lies in the very disposition of the soul which harmonizes either with the good or bad angel. If either spirit finds the soul discordant, he meets with resistance, and has to force an entrance; but if he find the soul accordant, he enters quietly, as into his own house. Why should a spirit that is master and at home in the soul enter with violence? No one knocks at his own open door.

To the grievous sinner, the demon usually presents allurements of the ruling passion, and, if the culprit be resolved to go on from evil to evil, he encourages him by presenting temporal enjoyments in the hope of keeping and confirming him in his habitual sinful disposition. If the sinner desires to turn from evil, the malignant spirit strives to retard him by suggesting feelings of sadness and molestation, by rousing fears of difficulties and impediments, by harassing and perplexing with sophistical reasonings, and by darkening and disquieting the mind in order to move the sinner to mistrust his ability to change for the better, or even to drive him in despondency to the verge of despair and distrust of God's mercy.<sup>1</sup> These wiles of the evil spirit are all remarkably

1. Cf. *Spiritual Exercises* by St. Ignatius Loyola; *Discernment of Spirits*, First Treatise.

exemplified in the action of Macbeth. His own affinity for evil had established a mutual relationship between himself and these same powers of evil. They recognize it, and come and go at will, as a master entering his own house. Their relationship is in turn accepted by Macbeth; he sees in them, preternatural agents of his fate, who, by their superhuman knowledge and power, shall aid him to retain in peace that which they had so truthfully promised him. On the morrow he will consult them, and learn the best ways and means to battle against his fears and dangers. He is determined to know the worst before him, and to meet it with the worst or most bloody means. Having sacrificed his eternal salvation for the crown, the fruition of his ambition is the sole good left him in the present or in after life. Why, then, in its defense should he regard sentiments of pity or remorse? For the peaceful possession of his one sole good, "all causes shall give way," and if need be, his hand shall be against every man. The voice of conscience shall be ignored or stifled. Too repellent is the thought of repentance, of public confession of his horrid crimes, and of restoring the crown to the rightful heir. Having already waded so far in blood, to return is more difficult than to move forward against the one enemy whom he fears in the brave but rebellious Macduff. Like the murderous Richard III., he feels that one sin impels him on to another:

"I am in  
So far in blood, that sin will pluck on sin."

Abandoned to the powers of evil and influenced by their foul suggestions, he boasts of contemplated bloody deeds of such a horrid nature that they must first be done before they may be weighed or examined. Brooding over them might overpower or paralyze his will; yet "young in deeds" of blood, he fears the rebellion of conscience which, unhardened in crime, is still susceptible of pangs of remorse (II. 122-144).

## SCENE FIFTH

### A SUPERFLUOUS CHARACTER

The present scene which, save for the first and last line, consists wholly of Hecate's speech, is commonly considered an interpolation. Clearly the work of an inferior artist, it was inserted by another hand than Shakespeare's, and in all probability by Middleton's. He was, it seems, after the Poet's retirement from the stage, engaged by managers to insert certain lyrical passages, which would bring the play into harmony with the growing melodramatic taste of the times. The scene introduces, in the person of Hecate, a new and wholly superfluous character, who takes no real part in the action of the drama. Her long speech is, moreover, couched in iambic metre, while Shakespeare's preternatural beings regularly speak in trochaic measure. Furthermore, the light lyrical element is strikingly inharmonious with the preceeding concept of those awful beings who meet Macbeth in a storm of thunder and lightning on the lonely blasted heath near Forres. One can hardly imagine them singing and dancing in mirth like elves and fairies. Inconsistent again with the tenor of the play, say certain critics, is Hecate's fault-finding with what the witches have done, or with the manner in which they have led on Macbeth to crime. She herself surely could not have managed better. This no doubt is very true. The criticism seems, however, to ignore Hecate's motive for reproof. She herself, more malignant of nature, certainly approves their evil work, and rejoices in their success; but in jealousy she chides them because, animated by an intense love of evil, she, their mistress and arch-contriver of all harm, can not help regretting that she had no share in their successful fiendish work.

Another discordant note is Hecate's reference to love. The Poet's character-sketch of the Weird Sisters excludes such a passion as incongruous either on the part of those uncanny, preternatural creatures, or of Macbeth. It is, however, common in Middleton's play, called *The Witch*, wherein gaining the love of mortal men, is the main object of thought and

purpose on the part of the witches.<sup>1</sup> In fine, the Weird Sisters of Shakespeare differ essentially from the witches of Middleton. The former are serious beings whose presence is exclusive of all mirth. The latter are associated with ludicrous incidents and odd ceremonies, common to old hags of popular superstition. The former, in hellish purpose, seek to inflame human passions, and to entangle human souls in moral evil; the latter, spiteful and revengeful, attempt to injure the body only. The former, from the moment that they first meet Macbeth, throw their fiendish spell about him, and sway his destiny by means of a fascination from which he too late awakens; the latter are creatures to whom a man or woman, plotting some dire mischief, might resort for aid or consultation. The witches of Middleton have names, and Hecate, a son, a low buffoon; those of Shakespeare are nameless, and have neither children of their own, nor seem descended from human ancestry; but as foul anomalies without human passions and human relations, they come in sudden storms of lightning and thunder, and vanish as suddenly into nothingness.<sup>2</sup> Notwithstanding these exceptions, the main import of Hecate is in perfect accord with that of the Weird Sisters.

### THE TRADE AND TRAFFIC

The scene opens with three witches greeting Hecate in gloomy darkness amid lurid flashes and crashing peals of thunder. Hecate is an infernal deity of classic myth and the queen of every form of diablerie. The murky storm is a fit external setting to the witches' dark and fiendish plot. Hecate's first words are a complaint that her wicked sisters have dared without her aid

“To trade and traffic with Macbeth  
In riddles and affairs of death.”

“These words,” says a critic, “are absurdly out of keeping with the context. They seem to imply a bargain between

1. Cf. Rolfe's *Macbeth*, p. 290, and Chambers', p. 164.

2. Cf. Lamb's *Dramatic Poets in loco apud Variorum Shakespeare*.

Macbeth and the witches, but there has been no mention of such. What were the gains in which they were to share? Macbeth has offered the witches no bribe, nor have they intimated that they desire or expect one." The objection indicates an ignoring of the fundamental notion upon which the tragedy is constructed, and that notion is the temptation of Macbeth, in which, by means of his ruling, or master-passion, evil spirits visibly embodied in the Weird Sisters, induce him to forfeit eternal happiness for the sake of the crown. True, there is no formal or explicit compact. Shakespeare did not deem one necessary; since, from his manifest portrayal of reciprocal interaction, his audience would readily understand how the Weird Sisters traded and trafficked in riddles with Macbeth in the expectation that, by holding out the crown to him, he would voluntarily seize it at the price of his soul's damnation. Instances of compacts, often explicit, were in the form of popular legends current among all peoples of Europe in the Poet's day. An example, the most widely known, was the story of Dr. Faustus, which Marlowe, a contemporary of Shakespeare, dramatized six years before the appearance of *Macbeth*, and which Goethe and Gounod have, perhaps, immortalized in modified form.<sup>1</sup> Such stories, so popular and widely spread, indicate not only a common belief in their possibility, but also the acceptance

1. "Dr. Faustus, a celebrated necromancer, flourished in the sixteenth century. His first printed biography appeared in 1587 at Frankfort. By means of the Black Art, he conjured up the devil, and with him made a contract according to which Satan was to grant him all his desires for full twenty-four years, after which the soul of Faustus was to be delivered to eternal damnation. Satan assigned him an attendant evil spirit named Mephistopheles, a devil who 'likes to live among men.' Faustus revelled to satiety in all manner of enjoyments till after midnight of the twenty-fourth year, when an unearthly noise was heard from Faustus' room, the howling of a storm which shook the house to its foundation, demoniacal laughter, cries of pain and anguish, a piercing, heart-rending call for help, followed by the stillness of death. Next morning they found Faustus' room empty, but on the floor and walls, evidence of a violent struggle, pools of blood and shattered brains; the corpse, mangled in a horrible manner, was found upon a dung-hill."

Some have doubted whether such an individual as Faustus ever existed; but it is now generally believed that there was a basis of fact upon which tradition has constructed the legend. His existence has, however, been asserted in the most direct manner by writers who profess to have conversed with him. Philip Melancthon—the man of all the "Reformers" whose word in regard to a matter of fact would most readily be trusted—says that he had himself conversed with Dr. Faustus. Conrad of Gesner (1561) is equally positive. Cf. Peter's *Die Litteratur der Faustsage*. Also the *International and the American Cyclopaedia*.

of Christian truths of divine revelation, which gives them the color of probability, and this was all-sufficient for Shakespeare and his audience. From the context, it is manifest that Macbeth was well aware of the evil nature of the Weird Sisters, as well as of their wicked purpose; that, after they had fanned the fires of his ambition, he avowed his readiness "upon this bank and shoal of time" to barter his eternal weal for the throne; and that later, when the crown adorned his brow, he complained in bitterness that he had gained it at the price of his soul's damnation. Therefore, it is clear that the witches'

"Trade and traffic with Macbeth  
In riddles and affairs of death,"

resulted in a gain for both sides: Macbeth gained the crown in this temporal life, and evil spirits, in the form of the Weird Sisters, gained his immortal soul in the eternal life to come.

As the witches in the present scene are sorceresses of the popular type, they have no knowledge of the future, but must obtain it of their demon-masters. Hence, Middleton in consistency pictures Hecate of the infernal regions as informing them of Macbeth's resolve to visit them on the morrow at the pit of Acheron. His purpose is, by means of their diableries, to learn his destiny from the evil spirits who had accosted him on the heath at Forres. By her orders the three witches are to meet her at the cavern in the morning, and in the interval prepare potent charms, which by their "illusion" shall draw him on to his "confusion." Acheron was originally the name of a river in Greece, which, according to a popular myth, was a passage-way to the lower world. The name was ascribed by poets to a river in hell, and, in consequence, became synonymous with hell, or the infernal regions. No name was, therefore, more appropriate for the dark cavern near the gloomy pool in the neighborhood of Macbeth's castle. It was a fitting rendezvous for these agents of hell who were to meet there in diabolical plot to lure on the usurper to other horrid deeds of blood.

Evidently, the tempting fiends look with concern upon the

visit of Macbeth. Though already in their toils, he might, now when greatly roused by new fears, anxieties, and feelings of remorse, yet elude their evil grasp. They, therefore, deem it necessary to deepen their spell upon him. They must buoy up his spirits, win his confidence, and by equivocations delude him with counterfeit pledges of security. With persons addicted to evil, the action of good and bad spirits tends to opposite effects. The good angel strives to stir up in the sinner great remorse of conscience and disturbance of mind in the hope of turning him from his sinful ways. How far Macbeth's mental disturbance and horror at the thought of Duncan's murder, his fears of fatal consequences, his scruples of conscience, his reasonings in soliloquy against the crime, and his long vacillation between duty and ambition, may have resulted from the action of the good angel, is indeed, on account of our complex nature, no easy matter to determine. Even now, though a blood-stained criminal, and accounted a deserter to the enemies of God, he is not wholly abandoned to the power of his evil tempters; in this life God's grace is never wanting, and His mercy always leaves the door open to the returning repentant sinner. Macbeth's evil angels have reason, therefore, to fear that his remorse of conscience, now heightened by the haunting ghost of Banquo, his dread of detection and just retribution, and the threatened rebellion of powerful nobles, which so sorely distract his mind, may frighten him from the course of crime upon which they have determined to urge him on, even unto final despair. They must, therefore, by opposing action, thwart any probable effect of the good angel. Hence, resorting to accustomed wiles,<sup>1</sup> they inspire his resolve to visit them in his troubles. In that fatal interview, they shall instil in him a firm belief and confidence in their prophetic spirit and preternatural powers, and engender a false feeling of security in a promised peaceful enjoyment of the crown. Thus may they hope to retain their grasp upon him, confirm him in evil, and surely lead him on to final destruction.

Such is the evil purpose of which Hecate boasts to the

1. Cf. Clare's *Science of Spiritual Life, Discernment of Spirits*, Rule 1.

witches. By their diabolical arts, they are on the morrow to conjure up before Macbeth's astonished gaze false apparitions, counterfeit souls of the dead, whose equivocal predictions shall inspire him with an assurance of safety. In consequence, he shall blindly spurn the term of allotted life, defy death, and live on fearlessly in hopes that are in contradiction to the dictates of human prudence and divine revelation. Hecate bases her certainty of success upon the truth well known and attested by experience, that "security is mortals' chiefest enemy."<sup>1</sup> No weapon of the tempting spirits of hell has proved more powerful against man's salvation than the senseless security with which they inspire him amid the distractions and enjoyments of a sinful life. The scene closes with a song which is found in *The Witch* of Middleton (ll. 1-37).<sup>2</sup>

## SCENE SIXTH

## DISCLOSURES

Though in modern representation, this, the last scene of the Third Act, is usually omitted for the sake of brevity, it is, nevertheless, of no small importance. Its purpose is to expose certain circumstances of which the audience should be apprised before passing on to the Fourth Act. It resembles in import and in action the last scene of the Second Act; both are couched in the form of simple dialogue, and both have the same purpose of enlightening the audience upon the outer world's opinion of Macbeth. They forcibly recall the Chorus of the old Grecian drama. In pauses which usually occurred between acts, the Chorus sang or recited verses in reference to the subject presented, often hinting in prophetic words of the catastrophe to follow, which, while preparing the audience for coming events, also increased the impression already produced. Similar in the present scene is the rôle assigned to Lennox and another lord, probably Angus or Ross. If the audience has hitherto been limited to happenings

1. Discernment of Spirits, in loco citato.

2. The same song of the witches is found with some modifications in the D'Avenant Quarto of *Macbeth*.

within Macbeth's court, the two lords in dialogue now disclose suspicions which are prevalent in the outer world, and which connect the murder of Duncan, of the grooms, and of Banquo, with the usurper's accession to the throne. Furthermore, possessed of secret information, they expose certain events concerning which the Poet had not yet illumined his audience, and hint at the avenging forces which, at home and abroad, are gathering against the "tyrant."

Lennox in a conversation previously begun, affirms that their like thoughts confirm like suspicions. His words breathe a deep-felt irony. Did not Fleance kill his father; since, like the sons of Duncan, he too has fled? But who can think the monstrous thought that Malcolm and Donalbain slew their gracious father? How the "damned" murder overpowered Macbeth with grief? Lennox had witnessed the slaying of the grooms, and notes the thane of Cawdor's wisdom in silencing their tongues forever, lest they should confess their innocence. So far, the usurper has done "all things well," and had he Duncan's sons and Fleance in his power, he would surely teach them what it is to kill a father. Ceasing his ironical words, he now speaks in low confidential tones of Macduff's living in disgrace, because of outspoken, unrestrained words, and refusal to honor the festival of the "tyrant's" coronation.

Lennox learns, in turn, that the rightful heir has fled to the English court, where he has been received with all the marks of princely dignity. Macduff too had fled to Edward, "the pious king," to seek the aid of Siward, Earl of Northumberland that, by their help and that of God above, he may free their feasts and banquets from bloody knives, and effect that, for faithful homage, men may bear honors without servitude. Allusion is made, thinks Rowe, to the savage custom anciently observed in the Highlands of sticking their dirks into the table when they sat down to dine with a mixed company. The same was the practice in our western wilds when, owing to the unsettled condition of the social and moral order, men sat down at table with weapons at hand beside them. We further learn that Macbeth, in exasperation at

rumors from the English court, is also preparing for war. In dramatic action, follows a minute description of Macduff's uncivil answer to Macbeth's messenger. As the former had not received a formal invitation to the coronation, it is commonly supposed that the surly words were spoken later, when questioned on his absence by Macbeth's paid spy.

In approval of Macduff's wisdom and caution the scene concludes with a prayer that God's holy angels may fly before him, and stir the mind of the "pious king" to receive his petition favorably, and send him back a messenger of hopeful blessings to a country suffering under a hand accursed. Of the present scene, Flathe<sup>1</sup> is perhaps the only critic to remark, and wisely so, that Shakespeare's frequent mention of prayer, of "the pious king," St. Edward the Confessor, of the help of holy angels, and of God, is not without special purpose of significance. Such mention is meant to remind us of man's dependence upon a Higher Power, of an all-ruling Providence, and of the irresistible moral force always present in the world, ready to come forth victorious in proper time and place. Prosperity too often turns men from God, adversity leads them back to Him (ll. 1-49).

1. F. G. Flathe; Shakespeare in seiner Wirklichkeit.

## ACT FOURTH

### SCENE FIRST

#### A QUESTION OF IDENTITY

The Weird Sisters at their first appearance began the temptation of Macbeth, and, in the present scene, continue by false promises to lead him on in crime. The witches and their horrid incantations, as all critics admit, are peculiarly Shakespearean. Though they are commonly represented on the public stage as identical with the Weird Sisters who accosted Macbeth and Banquo on the blasted heath, commentators are divided on the question, whether the Poet intended them to be the same. It seems highly improbable that so excellent an artist would without a sufficient and compelling reason, debase those preternatural beings, the "Fates," or Weird Sisters, to the low level of witches of the common type. Such a degradation is uncalled for, since the action requires nothing beyond the sorcery of popular belief. That they are of a higher type, differing in nature, form, and characteristics, from the witches of the present scene, is maintained by Fleay, an eminent critic, and in support of his position, he offers several proofs which may be readily supplemented by others based on the text.

Shakespeare drew his materials from the *Chronicles of Holinshed*, and therein, the Weird Sisters are said to "resemble creatures of the elder world, goddesses of destiny, endowed with the knowledge of prophecy." Dr. Forman, who witnessed the enactment of *Macbeth* by Shakespeare's own company, records them in his *Diary* as "women Fairies and nymphs." They have no fixed abode, but mingle with the wild elements of nature, and come in a sudden storm, gliding in like ghosts from a thundercloud. Nameless, foul anomalies,

descended from no human ancestry, they "look not like the inhabitants of earth"; and though seemingly corporeal, they instantly melt into air. They resort to no magic rites or incantations to discover the future, but personally gifted with "more than human knowledge, they look into the seeds of time and tell which grain will grow and which will not." They mystify and affect Macbeth and Banquo with awe and astonishment, and unsubmissive, refuse to obey the former's repeated command. They are considered by Macbeth as the "Fates," or mysterious, preternatural beings of "more than mortal knowledge."

Turning to the witches of the present scene, all is found to the contrary. In *Holinshed* they are sorceresses or wizards, clearly distinct from the Weird Sisters. They have a fixed and known place, the pit of Acheron, where, like the Scriptural witch of Endor, they practise in secret their sorceries in behalf of clients, and thither Macbeth in troubled mind resorts like Saul to learn his destiny. They have the common form of the old hag witches of popular belief, like Middleton's, but by the touch of a greater artist their ritual is much more diabolical. Without prophetic knowledge themselves, they must obtain it from their demon-masters, whom, either "of high or low degree," they conjure up by hellish rites of incantation. They do not overawe Macbeth, but though loathed and scorned as "filthy hags, as secret, black, and midnight hags," they are submissive to the "great king." In after reference to the scene, Macbeth alludes only to the demons whom the witches conjure up, first as the "spirits that know all mortal consequences," and later as "fiends that lie like truth." Further light is thrown upon the subject by Middleton's interpolation. As a contemporary of the Poet, he often saw the tragedy enacted, and later, when introducing a new witch scene in the Third Act, he was careful as a skilled dramatist to make it harmonize with Shakespeare's work. But his witches are sorceresses of the common type, and he identifies them with those of the present scene; they are to meet on the morrow at the pit of Acheron, where by magic rites they shall conjure up evil spirits that shall deceive

Macbeth by delusive promises; and this is precisely what the witches do in the scene before us.

Whether they be considered identical with the Weird Sisters, or merely the accredited agents of evil spirits, affects in no manner the action of the drama; in either case Macbeth is deluded and driven on to destruction. Considering the fact, however, as already noted, that witchcraft was prevalent in Shakespeare's day, and that King James, as well as his parliament, firmly believed in its reality, and enacted criminal laws of repression, what was more natural than that the manager of the *Globe* should utilize the popular craze? A presentation of actual diablerie upon the stage would not only keenly interest and entertain the Poet's audience, but also be a further compliment to the sovereign in whose honor he dramatized *Macbeth*. As a playwright, therefore, catering to the popular taste for the weird, for masks, and for pageants, Shakespeare pictures the witches of common belief, as conjuring up evil spirits and visions before the eyes of Macbeth. Their magic rites he portrays in conformity with practices, which from time immemorial have been observed by all sorcerers in league with demons. His presentation, however, is that of a master artist. His is a Satanic ritual, which rising above the charms and incantations of the common witch, and compressed and intensified to the highest degree of impressiveness, appears outlandish, repulsive, and horrible. Full with the foul and malignant love for evil that is characteristic of demons, it bears the unmistakable stamp of a monstrous diabolism.

### AN INSPIRED VISIT

The weird scene opens upon a deep and dark cavern. Howling winds and roar of pealing thunder, indicative of an approaching storm, fitly prefigure the moral storm which these agents of Satan shall arouse in the soul of Macbeth. Without the cavern, as sentinels, are stationed the "familiars" of the witches to watch for the approach of the expected royal visitor. "Familiars" were evil spirits that, under the

form of some animal, were assigned to attend or wait upon witches. The "familiar" of the first witch is a black streaked graymalkin. From its treacherous traits and nightly prowlings, the cat has always been, even from pagan times, the favorite agent of witches. It figures in direful prominence in all records of demonology, and its impish wickedness is told in stories common throughout Europe. The "familiar" of the second witch is the urchin, or hedgehog, an animal, ugly in appearance, solitary, nocturnal in habits, and weird in its movements. When the cry of the Harpy, the name of the third witch's "familiar," gives warning of Macbeth's approach, the three witches in excitement gather at once about a boiling caldron to brew the loathsome, fiendish charm that shall add fresh fuel to the sin-inflamed soul of their victim. Each in turn adds her share of horrible ingredients, of which some have greater potency, because "digged in the dark" or "in the moon's eclipse." A reference, no doubt, to the love of darkness, which characterizes diabolical agents; "they love darkness rather than light: for their works are evil." <sup>1</sup> Concerning their fiendish incantations, Dr. Johnson remarks: "On this great occasion which involved the fate of a king, Shakespeare multiplies all the circumstances of horror. The babe whose finger is used must be strangled at its birth; the grease must not only be human, but must have dropped from the gibbet of a murderer; and even the sow whose blood is used must have offended nature by devouring her own farrow. These are touches of judgment and genius." As soon as "the charm is firm and good," and cooled "with a baboon's blood," Hecate enters upon the scene. The part assigned her, many commentators agree, is clearly the work of Middleton. The speech, which is marked by a change from trochaic to iambic rhyming lines, is evidently inferior, and does not well accord with the serious business of the scene. She enters only after the witches have completed their Satanic charms, and solely, it seems, for the purpose of introducing the song, "Black Spirits," which is found entire in Middleton's own drama, *The Witch* (ll. 1-43).

1. St. John 3:19.

Macbeth now feels that he has reached the supreme crisis of his life. Amid the fears and dangers which beset him, he turns in feverish mental agitation to the trusted guides who had decreed him the crown. They, perhaps, will also aid him to retain his hold upon it, against all opposition. Hence, he resolves:

. . . "I will to-morrow,  
And betimes I will, to the weird sisters;  
More shall they speak: for now I am bent to know,  
By the worst means, the worst."

But where shall he look for those preternatural beings, those anomalies of nature, whose forms seemed so unlike human-kind? In his quandary his thoughts turn to the witches, whose rendezvous, he knows, is at the pit of Acheron. By their sorceries they can surely put him in communication with the "spirits that know all mortal consequences." Thither he hastens in buoyant hope, determined "to know by the worst means, the worst." Before he enters, "the witches scent their approaching prey and one, upturning her nostrils wide into the murky air," sagacious of her quarry, exclaims:

"By the pricking of my thumbs,  
Something wicked this way comes:  
Open, locks, whoever knocks!"

These significant words reveal the malignant spirit of these horrid creatures. In league with demons, they feel a magnetic sensitiveness to wickedness, and a desire to open to every one who bears a like affinity with themselves. His evil tempters sought Macbeth first; but now grown obtuse of conscience in the progress of his crimes, he eagerly seeks them and their guidance. Macbeth's course is vividly illustrated by that of another monarch; it runs parallel with that of Saul of Israel. King Saul was a brave, daring, and resolute captain; but in spite of great achievements, there was a pre-sage of misfortune, which from the first hung over him, gathered in storm and tempest, and at length overwhelmed him. A fear of God, a reverence for His law, and a desire

to obey Him is the duty of every man. Saul, however, seems never to have had the belief of God in his heart; never to have felt the abiding influence of religion; nor even to have had any deep-seated religious principle at all. Hence he made light of disobeying a positive command of God and, moreover, heard with surprise the prophet's words of condemnation: "It is like the sin of witchcraft to rebel, and like the crime of idolatry to refuse to obey the Lord. As thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, so has He rejected thee." From that hour Saul was troubled by an evil spirit.<sup>1</sup> In consequent misfortunes, his natural virtues wore away, because not deepened by religious principles, and he became proud, haughty, gloomy, resentful, capricious, and cruel. Rejected by the Lord and obsessed by evil spirits, Saul is sorely troubled at the approaching hordes of Philistines, and in desperation seeks to learn the issue of the battle from a professed sorceress, the witch of Endor. At his command, she conjures up a demon; but instead, and to the terror of the sorceress, the soul of the Prophet Samuel appears by divine ordination to declare God's wrath upon him. In the battle on the morrow Saul was numbered among the slain. (Cf. Cardinal Newman, *Character Sketches of Saul*, *passim*.)

### THE WITCHES' RENDEZVOUS

As Macbeth enters the cavern, the sight of the horrid hags, as well as revulsion of feeling at the necessity of consulting such fiendish agents, impels him to address them in contemptuous words of scorn. Conjuring them by virtue of their diabolical sorcery to discover his fate, even though it throw the order of nature into chaos, he expresses a readiness to accept the worst, but determines that for his "own good all causes shall give way." Having "in blood stepped in so far" as to sacrifice for the throne all other interests of time and eternity, he decides to wade further to retain it. In an insurrection of mind and heart against the moral laws of nature, he is buoyed up by the delusive hope of overbearing

1. 1 Kings 15 :23 and 16 :14.

them by the force of his lawless savage will, and cares naught if mankind cower and sicken at the sight of his deeds of blood and destruction.

The witches intent upon impressing Macbeth with the show of their preternatural powers, prefer him to hear the oracles of his fate from the lips of their "masters"—evil spirits, rather than from themselves. Hence, by new and hideous incantations they invoke a demon, either of "high or low degree," to appear visibly, and fittingly to perform the task assigned him. His evil tempters, in furtherance of their malign purpose, have now determined to overawe him by exhibits of preternatural phenomena, which, because indicative of their power and prescience, will impel him to accept their equivocal predictions as absolutely truthful. Macbeth, amazed and in dread, gazes upon the specter of an armed head, which, amid reverberating sounds of rolling thunder, rises before his astonished eyes. As soon as his haughty words of command are halted, he catches the solemn sepulchral tones of the ghostly warning to beware Macduff. He does not, however, comprehend the real meaning hidden under the symbol of the spectral armed head—his own—severed from his body, and born to Malcolm by Macduff (ll. 48-74).

Macbeth, after expressing his appreciation of the caution given against Macduff, feels impelled by curiosity to question the disappearing specter for further information. His imperious demand is, however, met by the First Witch's instant warning that the spirit will not be commanded. Shakespeare follows the popular belief that spirits, conjured up by incantations, were reluctant to be questioned. The belief was supported by several works on witchcraft current in his day. Again, with the sound of thunder the second specter in the form of a bloody child, appears before Macbeth. Mystified and gazing in fear and wonder, he hears his attention challenged in emphatic tones. He is exhorted to boldness, resolution, and bloody deeds; he may disregard and even scorn all opposition; for no son of man shall prevail against him. The bloody child symbolizes Macduff, who, in his own words, was "from his mother's womb untimely ripped." The second

specter is, as the demon informs him, more potent than the first: Macduff is more powerful than Macbeth. The latter, in ignorance of the import of the symbols, and of the true force of the equivocal prediction, feels himself at once inspired by new courage. Though he need no longer fear Macduff, yet to make the bond of fate irrevocable, he will slay him, so that in "assurance double sure," he may give "false-hearted fear" the lie, and "sleep in spite of thunder (ll. 74-86).

Macbeth's words are suddenly cut short by the flash of crashing thunder. While its rattling roar re-echoes through the deep cavern, the demon presents the third apparition. Its sight startles him more than before, and filling him with mingled sentiments of surprise, fear, and bewilderment, prompts him to face the witches, and in suspicion and excitement to demand the meaning of the specter, the meaning of the child crowned with the golden round, the symbol of supreme power and majesty. His curiosity again reproved, he intently listens to the demon's oracular prediction. It is again equivocal: Macbeth shall be vanquished only when the impossible occurs; only when the great woods of Birnam hill shall come to Dunsinane against him. Hence, in assured safety let him be proud, lion-hearted, and indifferent to rebels and conspirators. The apparition symbolizes the royal Malcolm, who with his soldiers on their march to Dunsinane shall carry before them boughs hewn from the trees of Birnam's wooded hill. Animated by full faith in the oracle, Macbeth feels inspired with fearless courage. The condition imposed is an impossibility; no mortal man can command the trees of the great Birnam woods to unfix their earth-bound roots and come in array against him. The thought of the armed head, which cautioned him to beware Macduff, recurs and, in a newly inspired fearlessness and valor, he defies his rebellious efforts. Let him, and Malcolm, and the faithless nobles conspire and gather warlike forces at home and abroad; their labors shall be futile till Birnam wood rise against him. In his assurance of safety, he gloats upon the thought that King Macbeth shall live his lease of life unharmed, and die,

in fine, a natural death only because of the divine universal law:<sup>1</sup> "it is appointed unto all men once to die" (ll. 86-100).

### RESEMBLANCE AND CONTRAST

When at the close of their incantations, the witches had in unison invoked a demon by the words:

"Come, high or low  
Thyself and office deftly show,"

their prayer was instantly answered. The demon's presentment of specters and utterances of deceitful oracles, "deftly show," not only the perverse nature of the demon addicted to falsehood, but also his "office," which is, by cunning fraud and specious promises, to win the sinner's confidence, in order to keep him more securely in evil ways, and even immerse him deeper in the quagmire of sin. The whole scene is an ingenious picture in illustration of some of the methods employed by evil spirits in the temptation of mankind. It is in harmony with the teachings of divine revelation, as recorded in Sacred Scripture. Though instances are multiplied throughout sacred and profane history, we pause on that experienced by St. Ignatius Loyola in the cavern at Manresa; because his temptation there presents several striking contrasts and resemblances to that of Macbeth.<sup>2</sup> Ambition was his master-passion, and it inflamed an unquenchable thirst for military glory and renown. When stretched upon a bed of sickness, and yet spellbound by visions of human glory, his soul was illumined by rays of divine grace, whose effulgence enabled him to perceive the vanity of human fame, its transient nature, and its emptiness. Before his mind arose a new celestial vision, which caused him to transform, ennoble, and supernaturalize his ambitious aspirations. He

1. Heb. 9:27.

2. "The single study of the young Hidalgo had been chivalrous romance; and his existence had been one gorgeous day-dream of princesses rescued and infidels subdued. He had chosen a Dulcinea, no countess, no duchess"—these are his words—"but one of far higher station; and he flattered himself with the hope of laying at her feet the keys of Moorish castles and the jeweled turbans of Asiatic kings"—Macaulay, *Ranke's History of the Popes*.

swore to serve henceforth no mortal king, a man like himself, but to consecrate his life and energies to the nobler service of the supreme and immortal King of glory. His heart aflame with the desire to achieve great things for God's glory, he now aspired, as a true spiritual knight, to do and to suffer, in proof of his loyalty and love, all and more than any saint had done.<sup>1</sup> In preparation for the conflict he felt inspired to repair to the near cavern of Manresa, where alone with God he passed a year in vigils, prayer, fastings, and corporal austerities. In his solitude he was not, however, left unmolested by the common enemy of man. Satan, no doubt, in the acumen of his superhuman mind, divined Loyola's capacity for good as a valiant captain in the army of the Lord, and, in consequence, assailed him uninterruptedly with terrible trials and temptations. "Loyola's experience in this solitude," says Francis Thompson, "was an epitome of the psychology of the saints; and it smote him all the more hardly and came home to him the more intimately, because he was utterly without knowledge of the spiritual life, and fought out his fight alone like the first Fathers of the Desert."<sup>2</sup>

Loyola's experience in the cave at Manresa is aptly recalled by that of Macbeth in the pit of Acheron. That pit, forbidding in its gloom and suggestive of the *infernal regions*, was in the midst of a dreary blasted waste, while the deep, dark cavern of Manresa with its entrance concealed by briars and bushes of thick entanglement, was situated in a beautiful valley, which on account of its admirable scenery, was known as the *vale of Paradise*. Macbeth, as the Weird Sisters predicted, sought the witches' cave in furtherance of his evil ambition; Loyola sought the solitude of the cavern to strengthen his resolve to reject worldly ambition and to prepare for entrance upon a nobler life. Both, for opposite

1. "He would still be a soldier—he would still be a knight-errant; but the soldier and knight-errant of the spouse of Christ. He would smite the Great Red Dragon. He would be champion of the Woman clothed with the Sun. He would break the charm under which false prophets held the souls of men in bondage. . . . Such was the celebrated Ignatius Loyola who in the great Catholic reaction bore the same share which Luther bore in the great Protestant movement."—Macaulay, *ibidem*.

2. Life of St. Ignatius by Francis Thompson, p. 20. . . . .

reasons, attracted "spirits that tend on mortal thoughts, murdering ministers that tend on nature's mischief." Macbeth bent on evil is in harmony with them; but Loyola bent on good is in hostility to them. Hence, these fallen spirits that, from the perversity of a blasted nature, make evil their good and good their evil, strive to confirm the one in his murderous course, and to bar the other from entrance upon a higher and nobler life. Both they tempt by the same common means of cunning, fraud, deceit, and falsehood. All this the Poet, in the case of Macbeth, has clearly expressed by visible and external forms in the persons of the Weird Sisters.

The temptation of Loyola has, however, been recorded by his biographers. The first attempt of the demon was to thwart his high resolve by continuous whisperings: "You are in the wrong place; once more at court or in the army your example would reform every one about you; heaven called you, not to hide yourself in penitential solitude, but to be a holy and illustrious knight; greater glory would accrue to God and more sublime would be your virtue, if you lived a saint in the midst of courts rather than a hidden penitent; should you have more at heart your own sanctity than God's glory and the salvation of many souls? Heaven, surely, did not change your heart that you might bury your talents in the gloom of a cavern, where by repulsive austerities you are bringing odium upon your sanctity." Failing in his efforts, the demon changed tactics, and seconding Loyola's extreme vigils and penances, daily urged him on to greater zeal. When at length the Knight's constitution was broken, and his natural strength gone, his evil tempter persistently suggested that he was still young, and dare not think of suffering for fifty years or more a penitential life so ruinous to his health. This snare again proving futile, the "prince of darkness" once more changed his method of temptation. Now that Ignatius had by imprudent austerities, sapped his physical strength, and in a severe fever lay at death's door, the demon labored to inflame his mind with pride and presumption. By an inward voice he whispered by day and by night:

“Why should you reject death? Do you not die a saint? In your exalted degree of sanctity you should fear neither the temptation of the devil nor the judgment of Almighty God.” To strengthen the temptation, the demon resorted to preternatural phantoms of illusion, which seemed so vivid and realistic that Ignatius could scarcely put them away. Before his wondering eyes the dark and dismal cavern is transformed into a beauteous scene, which seems suffused with the sheen of heavenly glory. In senses enchanted and heart overflowing with joy and happiness, Loyola gazes upon heaven opening in vision before him. Around its open portals crowd bright angels, who with beaming smiles extend toward him the martyr’s palm and the victor’s crown, and invite him to enter into the eternal bliss of the saints. Though the illusion was discovered, Satan did not desist from his purpose. Pursuing now another course of temptation, he labored for months in a final attack to overcome the knight by torturing his conscience on the rack of doubts and scruples. His mind darkened, perplexed, and tormented with harrowing thoughts and fears; his heart withered, and his dejected spirit immersed in sadness, even to the lowest depths of woe and desolation: he felt himself, amid the violence of the grief that engulfed him in the gloom and misery of hell, urged incessantly to despair of salvation. Thus tortured in mind and body, he heard by interior whisperings the tempter’s ceaseless suggestion of suicide, as the sole means of ending his intolerable sufferings.<sup>1</sup>

### GOOD AND BAD SPIRITS

Ignatius’ fidelity to his newly chosen King was amply rewarded by heaven. From later reflection upon his own experience at Manresa, he was enabled to pen certain rules which might aid Christians in temptation to distinguish between the activities of good and bad spirits. Of these rules, two are especially pertinent to the present scene of the drama. One states that the cause of consolation can proceed from an evil as well as from a good spirit. Each aims, however, at

1. Cf. *Life of St. Ignatius*, Stewart Rose, C. IV; Parsons, C. III; Bartoli, C. III.

a contrary purpose; the good spirit seeks to advance the soul further in virtue, and the bad to seduce it to sin and damnation. The other rule notes that the angel of darkness, aware of the soul's desires and inclinations, will at first follow up and encourage them with the intent of gradually drawing about it the secret noose of his deceits and perverse intention. These two wiles of Satan and his fallen angels are commonly exemplified in modern Spiritism. "When we consider the action of these spirits more closely," writes a French author, "one discovers with no small surprise that they are Catholics amongst Catholics, Protestants among Protestants, Jews among Jews, and even Materialists among Materialists. In Buda-Pesth they teach reincarnation; in England and America they deny it; to Swedenborg they confirm the orthodox heaven and hell; to Stainton Moses they refine away the doctrines of a distinctive Christianity."<sup>1</sup> In further confirmation of the Ignatian rules is the testimony of another author, himself long a Spiritist, and later a member of the Society of Psychical Research. "There are," he says, "instances of personally observed cases, in which the spirit after conveying the most exalted teachings respecting human duties and responsibilities, and after habitually introducing itself by prayerful aspirations of the most elevating kind, and completely transforming the mental and moral life of the persons concerned, was in the end discovered to be a masquerading spirit, and on its own confession keenly intent upon working the moral and physical ruin of its victims. The ingenuity displayed in attaining this end, the tricks and subtleties resorted to in order to escape detection and to continue in 'possession,' were in one or two instances of a kind passing all human comprehension and imagination."<sup>2</sup>

Macbeth like Banquo was a Christian and, therefore, knew that the Weird Sisters were but the embodiment of malignant spirits, whose purpose in dealing with man is to lead him to vice and irreligion. He knew like Banquo that the "father of lies," "the devil, can speak truth" as a means to attain his

1. Anatole Barthe apud *The Dangers of Spiritism*, p. 136.

2. J. Godfrey Rüppert; *Modern Spiritism*, Second Edition, p. 159. . .

evil end. He may not have known in particular the scriptural command of Almighty God: "Let there not be found any one that consulteth spirits, for the Lord abhorreth all these things."<sup>1</sup> "The soul that goeth aside after magicians and soothsayers, I will destroy out of the midst of its people."<sup>2</sup> He must, however, have known at least in a general way that his religion debarred the practice of witchcraft, sorcery, and dealings with evil spirits. Yet, contrary to the voice of conscience, he welcomed the temptation of the Weird Sisters. They knew that he had long nurtured in secret the prospect of royalty, and that it had become the one supreme desire of his heart. This passion they follow up, and encourage, and in the guise of the Weird Sisters, fan into flame by flattering predictions. When Macbeth finally strikes the blow that wins the crown, he also murders his moral nature. By that blow he forfeits heaven's favor. Henceforth, like King Saul after sinning, he becomes obsessed by evil spirits. Their purpose is not his peaceful enjoyment of royal honors, but to entangle him irretrievably in their snares. Hence, they pursue him further, harass him by fears and anxieties, and haunt him by Banquo's specter, in order to drive him to distraction in the hope that in mad desperation he will seek their aid and guidance. They know that the danger of losing the crown for which he has sacrificed all, both here and hereafter, will drive him to resolve upon desperate means to retain its possession; that as a bloody criminal, abandoned by God and mistrusting every man, he will look to them as his only hope; that under pressure of distress and discouragement, he will neither heed the Almighty's command against consulting occult powers or evil spirits, nor regard the penalty inflicted for a like offense upon Saul and King Ochozias.<sup>3</sup> Aware that by truthful predictions they had won his confidence and belief in their preternatural powers and knowledge

1. Deut. 18 :11.

2. Lev. 20 :6.

3. Ochozias, a king of Israel, sent to inquire of Beelzebub, the god of Accaron, whether he should recover from his sickness. The prophet Elias met the messengers and said to them: "Go and return to the king that sent you and say to him: thus saith the Lord, is it because there was no God in Israel that thou sendest to Beelzebub? Therefore thou shalt not come down from thy bed, but thou shalt surely die."—4 Kings 1.

of the future, they, on the strength of that confidence, inspire him to come and conjure them to reveal his fate. He wills to know the worst that awaits him and to prepare against it. They in turn, true to their perverse nature and malicious "office," "deftly" strengthen his trust by artful promises that assure him safe enjoyment of the fruit of his crime, and immunity from a violent death and defeat in battle. His confidence now strengthened anew, they inspire him to "be bloody, bold and resolute," and to "laugh to scorn the power of man." His absolute belief in their oracular promises impels him blindly and boldly to enter upon a course which shall not only verify their equivocal predictions, but also accomplish inevitably his own physical and moral ruin.

### DIABOLICAL SIGHTS

Though Macbeth's distracting fears and anxieties yield to buoyancy of spirits, when he is assured of his own personal safety and security upon the throne, his mind is, nevertheless, troubled by the jealous thought that the crown is, according to the Weird Sisters' prophecy, to pass in succession to "Banquo's issue." His "heart throbs" at the hateful thought and, in anxious curiosity, he questions the demon concerning the fateful promise. His tempters, aware that the unfolding of the truth will deeply wound his jealous heart, and becloud the present sunshine of his spirits, counsel him to "seek to know no more." But his imperious nature can brook no denial and, heedless of the caution, he thunders forth in angry disappointment a terrible curse against evasion. The curse is scarcely uttered, when the caldron begins to sink before his wondering eyes, and upon his ears resound strange mysterious noises. In modern representation, these noises are strident shrieks and clamors heard amid roars of thunder—the clamor of fiends shrieking in anticipated triumph over the lost soul of their victim, now hopelessly ensnared.

While Macbeth stands amazed and perplexed at the sight and sounds, the witches command the demon to grant his wish. In compliance the evil spirit exhibits another proof

of diabolical power by causing to pass in single file before him eight crowned, spectral kings, followed by Banquo's ghost. As in surprise and dread he gazes upon the silent, solemn shades, the witches point in gleeful mood at their victim, whose eyeballs they have seared. The spectral kings are commonly supposed to represent Robert II., Robert III., and the six James's, and those in the mirror, James's successors. The "twofold balls," or globes are the two islands and the "treble scepters," the kingdoms of England, Scotland and Ireland, which in James I. were united in one kingdom.

The tragedy of Macbeth was written and enacted shortly after the accession of James I., and that a marked compliment to him was intended in the present passage is universally admitted. The compliment was, no doubt, prompted by several causes. The narrow and selfish policy of Elizabeth, says Lingard,<sup>1</sup> had left the succession to the crown in suspense and uncertainty. When, therefore, the accession of the Scottish king was proclaimed, it was met with national rejoicing by all parties, and especially by the long-persecuted Catholics. Among the leaders of the party that agitated for religious liberty was a nobleman, who, incarcerated by Elizabeth, was pining away a prisoner in the tower awaiting execution. James, on arriving in the capital, invited him to court, and paid him special honor. This nobleman was none other than the Earl of Southampton, the Poet's greatest patron, devoted friend, and benefactor. Hence, it was but natural that while at Elizabeth's death, Shakespeare alone of all contemporary poets failed to sing her praise, the new monarch's manifest regard for his devoted friend and patron restored his Muse's voice to sing in marked compliment his appreciation of the favor.

The preternatural show of the spectral kings harrowed Macbeth's feelings, and roused him to alarm and apprehension. As one ghostly king after another passes before him, his mental disturbance increases, and his trepidation finds voice in more impassioned words. The first apparition seems too like Banquo's fearful image he had lately seen. At the

1. History of England, Vol. VII, c. 1. Edinburgh Edition, 1902.

sight of its crown he feels his eyeballs burning, and with an imperious gesture commands the abhorrent thing to depart. The second specter, followed by a third, appears, each with a "gold-bound brow," and with a marked sameness in the color of the hair, from which he concludes a relationship between them. In anger he turns to denounce the "filthy hags," but, as the fourth ghostly king stalks before him, he grows even more excited, and in panic questions whether the royal "line will stretch out" to the end of time, or the general day of judgment. While he speaks, a sixth king appears, followed by a seventh and an eighth, who holds a mirror, in which Macbeth sees reflected many more, of whom some bear a double globe and triple scepter. Dismayed by the "horrid sight," fear and dread next seize him, as Banquo's ghost appears, disfigured by telltale "mortal gashes" and hair matted by coagulated blood. Pointing at the line of kings in passing, and claiming them for his, Banquo smiles upon the criminal who in mad folly attempted to frustrate the decree of fate.

### EXULTING MOCKERY

The disappearance of the ghost leaves Macbeth a prey to anguish of mind. Overpowered by fear and apprehension, he turns in terrible anger to the witches, and demands whether all that he has seen is true. They express surprise at his amazement and alarm. Had they not, when promising him the crown, also promised the same to "Banquo's issue"? The mad riotous feelings which torture Macbeth's soul at this moment are difficult of description. Formerly, the mere thought or suspicion that his crime paved the way for the reign of "Banquo's issue" lashed him into such a fury that he madly challenged Fate herself to enter the lists against him. If it be that

"For Banquo's issue I have fil'd my mind;  
For them the gracious Duncan I have murdered;  
Put rancours in the vessel of my peace  
Only for them; and mine eternal jewel

Given to the common enemy of man,  
To make them kings, the seed of Banquo kings!  
Rather than so, come, fate, into the list,  
And champion me to the utterance!"

If such was the criminal's horror, anguish of mind, and remorse at the mere suspicion of his folly, how much more intensely is he tortured in mind and heart, when now he realizes that his horrible suspicion has become a certainty? As he stands dazed, dumbfounded, and harassed by conflicting passions, the witches notice his revulsion of feelings, and attempt to cheer up his crushed and afflicted spirits. At their charm the air resounds with preternatural music, to which the three circle round in a grotesque dance, and pointing in hellish glee to their victim, utter the sarcastic words:

"That this great king may kindly say  
Our duties did his welcome pay."

These words of exulting mockery reveal the diabolical spirit of the witches and fitly close a preternatural scene, in which his trusted mentors reward the presumption of their victim, who in insolence had challenged them to declare his fate. The words, moreover, express the relationship between evil spirits and Macbeth. He first welcomed them—affinities of evil—to his bosom, and they in turn maliciously repay his welcome. Originating nothing, they had only harped on the one desire of his heart and, by fanning the latent embers of an unholy passion, had stimulated it into fiery action. In this their last appearance, they confirm him in his bloody course, by inspiring an unwavering faith in their equivocal predictions. They know he will cling to them even to the bitter end, though one by one they prove a false reliance, and he drops, in fine, into the abyss yawning to receive him (ll. 100-132).

Too agitated and engrossed by repulsive thoughts and feelings, which were prompted by the terrible sight of Banquo's ghost and the spectral kings, Macbeth stood speechless and dazed, all regardless of the witches' brief dance.

But the music suddenly ceasing, roused his distracted senses, and hurriedly gazing about in nervous searching glances, he discovers that the witches have departed. Surprised, perplexed, and angered, he invokes a curse upon the "pernicious hour" that has afflicted him with information so repugnant. The curse scarcely spoken, Lennox enters, but receives no welcome. Macbeth's mind is still preoccupied and troubled by the sudden disappearance of the witches, or weyrd sisters.<sup>1</sup> In anger he imprecates the vengeance of heaven on "all those that trust them," and wishes that "the air whereon they ride be infected." It was a popular belief that witches in league with evil spirits were accustomed by their aid to ride by night on the winds to distant points of gathering. This belief is embodied in a work on *Demonology* by James I. (1616). Therein he speaks of witches as "Carried by the force of the spirit which is their conductor, either over earth or sea, swiftly to the place where they are to meet." The same idea is found in Milton:

"Nor uglier follow the night-hag, when called  
In secret, riding through the air she comes."

[Parad. Lost, II.]

The news that Macduff has fled to England further disturbs him, and in soliloquy he muses upon the fact that the timely flight of his arch-enemy has frustrated his "dread exploit"; in consequence, he resolves that the deed shall henceforth keep pace with his purpose. No longer "boasting like a fool," he shall proceed at once to give the wife and babes of Macduff "to the edge of the sword." His fearless resolve to do such bloody work is grounded upon a fatuous belief in the fiend's ironical promises, and this firm belief begets an equally firm reliance—a reliance which is the very means of driving him on to fulfill them in their real meaning. In a recklessness born of assured safety, he cruelly

1. Weyard (pronounced weyrd as in weight) is found in the original Folios, and there is no just reason, says Ilunter, for supplanting it by weird, the author having written weyrd. Spalding shows several instances of the use of weyrd sisters as applied to witches. Cf. Shakespeare's *Variorum* in loco.

devotes to needless slaughter the wife and children of the man "not of woman born," and thereby rouses to hatred and to vengeance the one man against whom he was cautioned, the *one man* fated to destroy him.

His mind is still oppressed by persistent thoughts of the diabolical sights, or visions that he had seen in the cavern, and he attempts to banish them by the firm resolve to have no further dealings with those infernal hags, and at once turns his attention to the lords and messengers awaiting him (ll. 133-156).

## SCENE SECOND

### LADY MACDUFF'S PLIGHT

The following scene, which portrays the murder of Macduff's wife and son, is usually omitted on our modern stage, but with doubtful propriety. The Poet, it is clear, did not deem a bare and brief mention in an after scene all-sufficient to enable his audience to comprehend the full force of Macduff's cry of agony on hearing of the massacre, and of Lady Macbeth's overpowering remorse of conscience, when, in the sleep-walking scene, she whispers the crime in heart-piercing words. The scene pictures the further evolution of Macbeth's tyrannous and bloody character, by exposing how he has reached such wanton barbarity as to massacre even innocent women and children. Moreover, it brings into prominence the one man against whom the Weird Sisters had cautioned him, and whom, by needless cruelty, he makes the fateful avenger of his crimes. Hence, the omission of the scene mars the spirit and moral of the play; without it, Macbeth appears less monstrous and odious than the Poet designed, and, in consequence, is apt to retain, in violation of the sense of poetic justice, too large a sympathy of the audience.

The scene brings welcomed relief to the mind, stretched to the highest tension by the late weird and preternatural happenings in the witches' cavern. Though in one part,

replete with horror and in others affecting us to pity and to tears, it, nevertheless, adds variety and soothes the feelings by recalling us to scenes of domestic life. We are introduced to the affectionate family; we hear "the timid lady's eloquent complaining to her cousin of her husband's deserting them in danger; we listen to the graceful prattle with her boy, in which she seeks relief from her melancholy forebodings"; and when all, so replete with pathos, stirs our hearts to deep sentiments of sympathy and pity, then it is that Macbeth's murderous ruffians enter to crown his revolting character with supreme horror. The scene, in portraying the character and fortunes of Macduff and lady, depicts in strongest colors two opposing forces: the one representing honor, loyalty, humanity, and domestic virtues; and the other, hypocrisy, treachery, selfish ambition, and remorseless cruelty. The slaughter of helpless and unoffending innocents clearly exposes the depths of moral degradation into which Macbeth's sinful passion has cast him. His former crimes were prompted by lawless ambition, but his last is purposeless, and simply lays bare the barbaric cruelty of a man once humane and honorable, whose conscience has been seared, and whose moral depravity has become so complete and hideous as to smother any sentiment of pity which might still lurk in the minds of his audience.

The scene is wholly laid within Macduff's castle. His wife has just heard from Ross of her husband's flight, and, as the curtain rises, she expresses her surprise and irritation in questioning words of remonstrance. "His flight was madness," she exclaims in painful apprehension. For similar action, the sons of Duncan were charged with treason and murder, and she dreads lest her husband's flight may, in like manner, be ascribed to guilty fear. To allay her anxiety, Ross suggests that she should rather attribute it to wisdom and prudence. She can not, however, from her own viewpoint, understand how her husband could under any circumstances abandon wife, babes, and castle to the same fears, from which he himself has fled. Were his love true, it would have inspired him to remain and battle bravely against all odds.

Where fear outruns love, flight can not be ascribed to wisdom and to reason.

Exceptions must be taken to the animadversions of Leighton upon the complaints of Lady Macduff. He writes:

“It has always appeared to me that the character of Macduff suffers seriously by the accusation of his wife and that such effect mars the play, in as much as he, being principally opposed to Macbeth, should be presented generous, chivalrous, and good; in contrast with the usurper of Duncan’s throne, who is selfish, treacherous, and wicked. To enlist our sympathies to the fullest extent, and to make the moral of the play most effective, the spirit of ill, represented by Macbeth, should be opposed by a spotless champion of good and right, and not by one suffering in reputation under such accusations as his wife makes against the fugitive thane.” Robinson’s *Epitome of Literature*, April 15, 1879.

Such criticism appears just only on the condition that, forgetful of the Poet’s sketch of the noble character of Macduff, we concentrate our thoughts upon the accusations of his wife, while ignoring the fact that they were uttered in an agitation of mind and feelings bordering on hysteria. Under such stress of circumstances, her accusations are indeed excusable. Macduff, it is true, might have saved his wife from fear and anxiety by informing her of the purpose of his flight, or brief absence on an important mission to the English court; but secrecy was absolutely necessary for success. Hence, while commissioning her cousin Ross to break the news of his departure, he could not disclose its purpose, nor could he foresee that his mere “flight,” since its purpose was secret, would entail the destruction of his family. On the other hand, he was positive that, if Macbeth knew of his secret design, he would frustrate it, or failing in that, take vengeance upon his family. The safety of his wife and children lay, therefore, in absolute secrecy of the purpose of his “flight.” His brief absence was prompted by affection for his family, as well as by purest patriotism; its object was to overthrow a bloody tyrant, and thereby bring at once safety to his own and peace to his country.

Careful to guard the character of Macduff against asper-

sion, Shakespeare not only pictures him throughout the drama as "generous, chivalrous, and good," in contrast with the "selfish, treacherous, and wicked usurper," but also makes him the spotless, loyal champion of virtue and justice in behalf of his suffering country. Even in the present instance, he causes Ross to challenge Lady Macduff's accusations, to defend her husband, and to reprehend her words as prompted by fears and overwrought feelings. Macduff, he pleads, is "noble, wise, judicious, and best knows the fits of the season," or what befits the critical juncture of the times. Under a cruel tyrant, all men are traitors and, though unconscious of any crime, yet from fear, so credit every rumor of danger as to be tossed about on a wild and violent sea of uncertainty. Still, there is hope that the very excesses of the bloody usurper shall rouse a reaction from which shall spring the peace and happiness of the state. Ross, after blessing the little boy, takes his leave, fearing lest the manifest distress and suffering of his cousin might stir him to tears, which, while disgracing his sturdy manhood, would only heighten the "discomfort" of her present affliction.

### A PRECOCIOUS CHILD

Alone with her son, Lady Macduff in maternal tenderness turns her thoughts from her own sense of grief and abandonment to the future of her child. As question after question, uttered in motherly solicitude, is met by her precocious boy's surprising wit, the scene advances to deeper pathos. His naïveté and brilliant replies naturally recall a similar creation in Prince Arthur of *King John*. The stage-children of Shakespeare are all marked by precociousness. This characteristic did not, however, seem incongruous to theater-goers of his day, who were wont to attend the frequent performances of the Choir-boys of St. Paul's and the Westminster School. Organized into companies, and invading the public stage in competition with adult actors, even of Shakespeare's own company, these striplings met with acclaim, and long held high popular approval. In plays that were replete with pleasantries, facetious banterings, quips,

conceits, and witticisms, these youthful actors, in the full enjoyment of a freedom denied their elders, were accustomed to indulge in satire, ridicule, and irony, and to caricature noted characters of the social and political world to the great admiration and applause of their audience. Of these Choir-boys the Poet says:

“There is, sir, an aerie of children, little eyases, that cry out on the top of the question, and are most tyrannically clapped for ’t: these are now the fashion; and so berattle the common stages, — so they call them, — that many wearing rapiers are afraid of goose-quills, and dare scarce come thither.” (Hamlet, Act II, sc. ii.)

We know not how far Lady Macduff, a Christian mother, instructed her child in Scriptural lore; but, when in painful solicitude she questions her fatherless son how he will now live, his ready reply, says Lamartine, is sublime and candid, and surpasses that of Joas in Racine’s *Athalie*, “Aux petits oiseaux il donne pâture.” A Christian mind instantly perceives in the reply of the precocious boy an allusion to the Sacred Text; for it aptly recalls Our Savior’s warning against too great a solicitude for temporal things:<sup>1</sup> “Behold the birds of the air, for they neither sow, nor do they reap, nor gather into barns: and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not you of much more value than they?” (ll. 1-62.)

Lady Macduff’s conversation with her child is rudely interrupted by the hurried entrance of a stranger. He is commonly identified as one of the murderers, whom Macbeth has commissioned to exterminate the family of Macduff. The thought of the inhuman deed has overcome him on the way, and yielding to sentiments of pity and to stings of conscience, he hurries on before his companions in order to warn Lady Macduff of approaching danger. Some critics suppose that Lady Macbeth, having learned of her husband’s cruel order, bribed one of the murderous band to hasten on in advance and give timely warning. The messenger all breathless and excited rushes into the apartment and, to allay Lady Macduff’s fears and to secure credence, assures her that his

1. Matth. 6:26.

presence, prompted by no guilty design, is due to an honorable and upright purpose. Though a stranger he is loyal to her house and desires her safety. Let her, therefore, take a rude, homely man's advice, and with her little ones fly from impending danger. He knows it is cruel to affright her thus, but his cruelty would be greater if, failing to warn her and her children, he allowed them to be overtaken in surprise by approaching danger. After a parting prayer that Heaven preserve her, his exit is as hasty as his entrance.

The words of the messenger, inexplicit as to the nature of the danger, did not awaken Lady Macduff to the imminence of her peril and to the necessity of instant flight. Unconscious of evil-doing and unsuspecting of danger that arises from her husband's known hostility to Macbeth, she tarries, and in soliloquy questions any reason for flight. Soon turning her thoughts from self to objective conditions, she "remembers" that "in this earthly world" justice is at the mercy of the minions of power; that cunning wickedness is oftener lauded, while real virtue unesteemed is "accounted dangerous folly." As, in consequence, she concludes that conscious innocence is no shield against oppression, the murderers rudely rush in, and in scowling anger gaze about in quest of her husband. The forced entrance of these hired assassins, whose very looks proclaim them arrant villains, semi-barbarous men of the lowest, vilest type, excites her to horror, and prompts a reply worthy of noble Macduff's wife. As they hurl back in hissing sound the insulting epithet of traitor, the term so inflames to rage the little heart of the precocious boy that his blood, tingling with the valor of a knightly race, he is all forgetful of his youthful years, and in defiance gives, in brave retort, the lie direct to the shaggy-haired villains. In return, he receives his death-blow, and falling, dies uttering in shrill, childish voice his last love-prompted words of warning: "Mother, run away, I pray you (ll. 63-84)!"

## SCENE THIRD

### MALCOLM'S SUSPICIONS

The present scene transports us from Macduff's castle to a room in King Edward's palace, where the fugitives, Malcolm and Macduff, meet. If their dialogue, the longest in the play, seems tedious to certain critics, it, nevertheless, produces strong dramatic effects. These result from strained relations which arise from Malcolm's manifest suspicions of Macduff and his artifice to discover his purpose at the English court. The scene allows intervening time in which the war-clouds may gather. It discloses the growing fury of the tyrant, the increasing horror in which all Scotland holds him, and the mustering of hostile forces at home and abroad, and so gradually prepares us for the *dénouement* in the vindication of justice.

The scene has, moreover, another purpose. Hitherto, mainly occupied with the usurper's rise on the swelling tide of success, we have seen little of the youthful Malcolm, the rightful heir and, in consequence, know not whether he is strong or weak, ignoble or honorable of character. But now that Macbeth's good fortune begins to decline and Malcolm's in turn to rise, the young prince appears more prominently before us, revealing his true nature, rich in noble qualities that win our fullest sympathy. The dialogue in contrasting the youthful crown-prince with Macduff, his faithful subject, illuminates the character of both; and while exposing the admirable unselfishness of the former, emphasizes the loyalty and patriotism of the warrior whom the Fates have made the avenger of the murdered king.

The prince is overcome by grief at the sorrowful news of his country's sufferings, and seeing no hope of the overthrow of the tyrant, voices his feelings of desolation and despair. Macduff, on the contrary, a man inured to arms, speaks for open war. Rather than despair, they should as patriots stand over the prostrate form of their bleeding country and defend her with "the mortal sword." Even the heavens, re-echoing

the wail of widows and orphans, cry aloud for vengeance in unison with suffering Scotland. Malcolm's reply fills Macduff with disappointment and chagrin. After all his risks to confer with the prince at the English court, and arrange for the overthrow of the despot, he finds his patriotic counsel disregarded, and himself suspected of treacherous purpose. Malcolm, after his father's murder by a perfidious kinsman, found his faith in human nature rudely shaken. Aware that his own existence is an impediment to the usurper's safe and lasting tenure of the crown, he fears lest Macduff, in spite of his loud profession of loyalty and patriotism, may be but another of Macbeth's emissaries who daily beset his path at Edward's court. The thane of Fife, he says, once loved the usurper well, and has not yet been injured. As a man of experience, he may learn the tyrant's cruel character from his conduct toward himself, and consider it a stroke of worldly wisdom "to appease an angry god" by sacrificing to his fury a helpless and innocent lamb.

Surprised and irritated, Macduff, in tones of injured feelings, is quick to repel the insinuated charge of treacherous purpose. Malcolm replies in appeasing words: "You may not be treacherous, but Macbeth is. Men naturally good and virtuous have been known to belie their character at the imperious command of a tyrant who had power to reward or punish. You must pardon suspicion in a man who is beset on all sides by Scottish spies. If you are truly honest, suspicion will not make you treacherous: though treason against Heaven's king robbed Lucifer, the brightest of angelic hosts, of grace and glory, faithful angels still are radiant; though vile things often mask in the garb of virtue, virtue herself still wears her grace and loveliness." Macduff replies in despondent words: "I have lost my hopes," hopes of meeting with the full confidence of the prince, and of arranging for the tyrant's overthrow. Malcolm misunderstands him and expresses suspicion that Macduff's lost hope is none other than that of betraying him, and in this frustrated hope, he sees perchance a confirmation of his fears. He does not fathom the thane of Fife's deep sense of honor, justice, and patriot-

ism; and, therefore, can not comprehend how, without a secret understanding, he could abandon his wife and children—"those strong knots of love"—unprotected against the fury of the bloody usurper.

At Macduff's manifest indignation, the prince pauses and cautiously digresses to apologize for his half-felt suspicions: "Let not prudent fears—the guardians of his safety—be to the dishonor of the thane, who, notwithstanding, may be truly just and loyal." Convinced of the prince's firm-set suspicions and the consequent failure of his mission, Macduff despairs of Scotland's rescue, and overcome by passionate grief, apostrophizes his poor bleeding country. Tyranny has laid deep her foundations, and may enjoy securely the fruits of her cruelty and oppression; since the rightful monarch's refusal to maintain his right to the crown, leaves it confirmed to the criminal usurper. Utterly dispirited and afflicted in mind and heart, he bids the prince farewell, and in parting words protests with vigor that to gain the whole realm, now in the tyrant's grasp, and in addition, all the fabulous riches of the East, he would not be the villain that Malcolm suspects (ll. 1-37).

#### A TEST OF LOYALTY

Though Macduff's passionate words have broken the prince's "absolute fear" of treachery, he desires more assurance of his countryman's loyalty. Hence, to test him further, he proceeds to accuse himself of all crimes imaginable, with the view of convincing him of his own unfitness for the throne. If with the "goodly thousands" offered him by "gracious Edward," he should crush the tyrant, yet his own many vices would bring his "poor country" more sufferings than it had before. Once possessed of the supreme power and free to indulge pernicious inclinations, which are strong in a nature perverted by the engraftment of every vice, "black Macbeth" would appear to all Scotland as white as snow, and a lamb most innocent in comparison with his own boundless wickedness. Macduff in reply, rejects the comparison; in his opinion, no demon of hell's many legions can surpass Macbeth's damnation for evil.

Malcolm grants that the tyrant "smacks of every sin," and recounts seven of them. They are the seven capital, or deadly sins from which, as from a fountain source, flow numberless other sins. From pride flow ambition, vainglory, presumption, and hypocrisy; from covetousness, fraud, injustice, perjury, treachery, and hardness of heart; from lust, blindness of the intellect, irreligion and a seared conscience; from anger, strife, hatred, murder, and blasphemies; from gluttony, scurrility, sensuality, and darkness of the mind; from envy, hatred, calumny, detraction, and treachery; from sloth, aversion to duty, inconstancy, impurity, and despair. These seven capital vices are probably symbolized by the seven evil spirits of which our divine Saviour spoke in reference to the unclean man: "Then he goeth and taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man is made worse than the first."<sup>1</sup> Malcolm maintains that he is less fit to reign than Macbeth, since he himself is infected with these seven deadly sins. His voluptuousness is, moreover, fathomless, his intemperance boundless, and his avarice insatiable.

Macduff, in reply, admits that intemperance, or unrestrained passion is the very source, or origin of tyranny; for in the moral world,

. . . "The state of man,  
Like to a little kingdom, suffers then  
The nature of an insurrection." (Julius Caesar, II, i, 67.)

Again, in the political world, rebellion against restraints of reason and the moral law has caused "the untimely fall of many kings."

Malcolm, in charging himself with avarice, dilates upon it, as a vice which would, in his evil-compounded nature, were he king, so batten on insatiable appetite as, by red-handed robbery and oppression, to inflame the realm to riot and rebellion.

Macduff readily concedes that "the desire of riches is the root of all evil."<sup>2</sup> The vice more deeply rooted than sum-

1. Matth. 12:45.

2. 1 Tim. 6:10.

mer-passing lust grows in appetite by feeding, and only dies in the grave of corruption. Though this monster-vice has been the sword that has slain many kings, yet Malcolm should not hesitate to claim the throne; since such a vice will seem sufferable in presence of countervailing virtues.

“But I have none,” is the emphatic retort of the prince; and it quickly shatters the hopes of Macduff. Protesting that his are none of the “king-becoming” virtues, he recounts them—the twelve gifts of the Holy Spirit—as enumerated in the Catholic catechism. The classification is borrowed from St. Paul’s letter to the Galatians.<sup>1</sup> Malcolm, no doubt, derived his perfect knowledge of these distinctive virtues, or “king-becoming graces,” from his devout Christian parents, of whom the Poet says:

. . . “Thy royal father  
Was a most sainted king; the queen that bore thee,  
Oftener upon her knees than on her feet,  
Died (spiritually) every day she lived.”

Such a pious mother was, we must suppose, most anxious to fulfill her obligations to instruct her son, the crown-prince, even from his tender years, in the truths of that religion which she knew to be the foundation of the moral order, and of the virtues that should grace the reign of a Christian king. The contrast which Macduff draws between Malcolm’s sad picture of himself and his pious mother, is not found in Holinshed, but is the Poet’s own creation. Having exposed the vices that disgrace monarchs, and the virtues, or “king-becoming graces” that should adorn rulers of men, he holds before Malcolm his virtuous mother for imitation. The import of the lines, some think, is to present to King James for emulation his own mother, the virtuous Queen of Scots. The deviation from Holinshed suggests, moreover, a striking parallelism: as Duncan and Macbeth were cousins, so were Mary Stuart and Elizabeth; as Lady Macbeth instigated the murder of Duncan to gain the crown, so Elizabeth accomplished the death of James’ mother to secure her hold upon it; as Malcolm ascended the throne on the death of the tyrant, so

1. Gal. 5:22, 23.

did James I. on the death of the cruel Elizabeth. Again, at the close of the tragedy, the Poet refers to the last of the Tudor dynasty, when he pictures the king,

“As calling home our exiled friends abroad  
That fled the snares of watchful tyranny.”

In testing the sincerity of Macduff's loyalty, the prince not only positively disclaims all the virtues mentioned as “king-becoming graces,” but verily insists that he is tainted by each of the opposite vices. Nay, had he the power, he would, he affirms, throw sweet concord into hell's confusion, and confound universal peace with riotous commotion. “If such a one,” asks Malcolm, “be fit to govern, speak.”

All the while, Macduff had listened in mingled sentiments of amazement and horror to the earnest self-confession of the prince; but, startled by the question, he could only exclaim in feelings of pity and hopeless despair: “O Scotland, Scotland!” His noble soul, stirred to lofty patriotism, bewails the miseries which prophetic vision discloses in store for her. His people must continue to groan under the bloody scepter of the usurping tyrant; since, in defamation of his royal lineage, Malcolm stands self-debarred and self-accused. His father was known a saintly king, and the queen, devoted to prayer, daily mortified her body that she might live spiritually. The phrase seems suggested by the Apostle's words, “I die daily” by the chastisement of the flesh.<sup>1</sup> Macduff, now afflicted in mind, sore of heart, and depressed in spirits by the hopelessness of righting his country's wrongs, assures the prince that the vices of which he is self-accused have in profound sadness banished him from Scotland.

That Macduff should seek the concurrence of the rightful heir in the project of overthrowing the usurper, was but natural and even necessary. This singular scene, however, presents thus far the strange spectacle of a prince, whose highest interest was the destruction of the tyrant, resorting to subterfuge to dissuade from the task the one man who

1. 1 Cor. 15:31.

could harm Macbeth, and so laboring all unwittingly to nullify the decree of fate.

Accepting the manifest sincerity of Macduff's grief and despair as proofs of true loyalty and patriotism, the prince admits that they have banished all fears and suspicions of his integrity. After excusing his artifice on the plea of prudence and wisdom, which dictated caution against "devilish Macbeth," who was continually seeking to ensnare and bring him within his power, he proceeds to unspeak, in the name of God, his own false self-accusation. It was the first falsehood of his life. Such as he is, he devotes to Macduff and his poor country's good. Even now, at King Edward's command, his old uncle Siward, the Earl of Northumberland, with ten thousand men completely armed and prepared for war, are ready to march into Scotland. We shall now join them, says the prince, and may the lot which divine Providence has in store for us be equal to the justice of our cause.

Macduff, amazed and puzzled, stands brooding in moody silence over conflicting thoughts, until aroused by the prince's questioning words. The latter having dropped the subterfuge of villainy, fails, however, to regain at once his friend's full confidence. Hence, the thane replies, such contradictions between welcome and unwelcome words are bewildering, and seem hard to reconcile (II. 37-139).

#### A VIRTUOUS AND WICKED KING CONTRASTED

The high dramatic effect of the following episode arises from the contrast between a virtuous and a wicked king. The "gracious" Edward is pictured a benefactor of his people, "about whose throne hang sundry blessings that speak him full of grace"; while Macbeth's cruelties and tyranny bring afflictions upon his subjects and disorders to the realm. Shakespeare is fond of considering the state of man as a little kingdom whose well being depends upon his physical or moral life. Though fortified against moral evil "with all the strength and armor of the mind," man's little kingdom when swayed, not by reason, but by uncontrolled passion, "suffers the nature of an insurrection." What is true of man's little

kingdom, the Poet often sees verified in the state, or larger kingdom, wherein "the lives of many depend and rest upon" the weal of the ruler; a monarch's fall affects not himself alone, "but like a gulf doth draw what's near it with it: he is a massy wheel,"

"Fix'd on the summit of the highest mount,  
To whose huge spokes ten thousand lesser things  
Are mortised and adjoined; which when it falls  
Each small annexment, petty consequence,  
Attends the boisterous ruin." (Hamlet, III, iii.)

The metaphor of the great royal wheel, which was common among peoples of the Middle Ages is, no doubt, in the modern world embodied in the notion of the wheel of Fortune. Of it Dante speaks:

"Master," I said to him, "Now tell me also  
What is this Fortune which thou speakest of,  
That has the world's goods so within its clutches?  
That she might change at times the empty treasures  
From race to race, from one blood to another,  
Beyond resistance of all human wisdom.  
Therefore one people triumphs, and another  
Languishes in pursuance of her judgment,  
Which hidden is, as in the grass a serpent.  
And this is she who is so crucified  
Even by those who ought to give her praise,  
Giving her blame amiss, and bad repute.  
But she is blissful, and she hears it not;  
Among the other primal creatures, gladsome  
She turns her sphere, and blissful she rejoices." 1

Shakespeare as a monarchist and zealous tory had little faith in the rule of democracies. His was the current popular view of the divine right of kings, a view which received its first mortal blow only forty years later, when the spirit of revolution reached its acme in the execution of Charles I. Obligated to portray the cruelties and disorders wrought by the

1. Inferno VII, 67-96.—Longfellow's translation.

Scottish king, the Poet is pleased to counterbalance the effect by the contrast of true sovereignty in the good and beneficent king, whose sanctity gives him such heavenly power that by mere touch he heals his afflicted subjects.

Such portrayal was, moreover, gratifying to an audience which, estimating Edward's character by the test of popular affection, ranked him first among English kings. "The goodness of his heart was adored by his subjects, who lamented his death with tears of undissembled grief, and bequeathed his memory as an object of veneration to their posterity. The blessings of his reign are the constant theme of early English writers. He exhibited the interesting spectacle of a king totally devoted to the welfare of his people. By his labors he restored the dominion of the laws; by his vigilance he warded off foreign aggression; and by his constant solicitude he appeased the feuds of his powerful nobles. Pious, kind, and compassionate, he was the father of the poor and the protector of the weak, more willing to give than to receive and better pleased to pardon than to punish.<sup>1</sup> To him the principle that the king can do no wrong was literally applied by the gratitude of the people, and whenever under subsequent despotisms they could express their wishes, their constant call was for 'the laws and customs of the good King Edward.'"<sup>2</sup> The description of his miraculous power is in strict conformity with historic evidence. Even during the years of exile in Normandy, before his accession to the throne at the age of forty, his high virtue was attested by the supernatural power of healing diseases.<sup>3</sup> His personal holiness thus approved by

1. "On a certain occasion the lords of the kingdom, understanding that the king's exchequer had been exhausted by his excessive alms, raised upon their vassals a large sum unknown to him, and on Christmas begged his majesty to accept that free present of his grateful subjects, to clothe his soldiers and to defray other public expenses. Edward, surprised to see such a heap of money gathered into his exchequer, returned his thanks to his affectionate subjects, but expressed a great abhorrence of what he called a pillaging of the poor, and commanded that it should be returned every farthing to those that had given it." (Alban Butler, *Biography of St. Edward the Confessor*, p. 152.)

2. Lingard's *History of England*, Vol. 1, p. 357.

3. "During his exile in Normandy, Edward vowed a pilgrimage to St. Peter's tomb in Rome, if God should put an end to the misfortunes of his family. After his coronation, he was however on certain conditions dispensed from the vow by Leo IX, on account of the difficulty of leaving England without subjecting it to grievous dangers. The conditions were that he spend on the poor the money he would have spent on his pilgrimage, and

miracles during life, and again by many others wrought after death at his tomb, led Alexander III. to honor him by solemn canonization under the title of Saint Edward the Confessor.<sup>1</sup>

### A DELICATE COMPLIMENT

With a court performance in view, the Poet was no doubt led to pay an evident yet delicate compliment to the new sovereign. As the latter's fondness of touching for the "king's evil" was already notorious, Shakespeare readily divined that any reference to his healing power, as inherited from the Saintly Edward, would prove most pleasing to so vain and ostentatious a monarch.<sup>2</sup> Careful, however, not to affirm its actual possession, he bases the supposition upon "it hath been said," as found in the *Chronicles of Holinshed*. The Poet, as appears from his writings, was sufficiently versed in Catholic teaching to know that a miracle is a supernatural work done by Almighty God in testimony of his servant's holiness of life or mission; and, therefore, as a testimonial of individual spiritual worth or character, being purely personal and intransmissible, ceases with the life of the favored individual. That this was true of St. Edward's miraculous power was strongly maintained by William of Malmesbury, who wrote nearly half a century after Edward's demise, and who, says Sir H. Saville, "was the best historian of our nation."<sup>3</sup>

The contrary opinion probably arose from the credulity of the masses, who failing to distinguish between the saintly character of King Edward and his royal office, naturally supposed that the same supernatural power descended to his

moreover, construct a monastery in honor of St. Peter. Edward, in accordance, raised the first structure of Westminster Abbey and gave its Abbey Church, the appropriate name of St. Peter, in honor of the Apostle whose tomb he had vowed to visit." (Alban Butler, *Ibidem*, p. 160.)

1. "In the second year after his canonization and the ninety-seventh after his demise, the body of St. Edward was found still incorrupt, with limbs flexible as in life, and was transferred on the 13th of October to a grander shrine by St. Thomas of Canterbury in presence of King Henry II and many persons of distinction; in consequence, his festival is now kept on that day." (*Ibidem*.)

2. Cf. Lingard's *History of England*; *Character of James I*, Vol. VII. p. 277. (Edinburgh Edition.)

3. *Biography of St. Edward the Confessor*. Alban Butler, Vol. IV. Oct. 13.

successors, especially as they too received at their coronation the same sacred unction of Holy Church. This supposition was for political reasons encouraged by successive monarchs during the centuries in which the divine right of kings passed unquestioned. Against it stands the formidable historic fact that St. Edward's miraculous power was never common to anointed kings. Nevertheless, Chambers affirms that in Shakespeare's day<sup>1</sup> was still prevalent "the superstitious belief that the touch of an anointed king was the only remedy for scrofula," a disease which, in consequence of this belief, became in time known as the "king's evil."

This belief, though often attacked and discredited,<sup>2</sup> was, on the other hand, abetted by the crown, and zealously defended by courtiers and royal officials, who saw in its denial an affront to the king. Andre Laurent, a contemporary of James and an eminent physician, attendant on Henry IV of France, wrote against it, charging the English sovereign with hypocrisy. "James," says Clarendon, "fancied himself endowed with Edward the Confessor's power," and "always superstitious was," affirms Chambers,<sup>3</sup> "specially proud of exercising it." Though burdened with the cares of three kingdoms, he turned, as head of the state church and defender of the Faith, to theological pursuits as of higher importance, revised works of religious institutions, gave directions to preachers, and confuted the heresies of foreign divines. In the language of his flatterers, he was the British Solomon, but, in the opinion of less interested parties, he merited the appellation given him by the Duke of Sully, that of the "wisest fool of Europe."<sup>4</sup> It is not, therefore, incredible that such a man, so subject to flattery and so notorious for vanity and love of ostentation, accepted the popular belief, and "touched for the king's evil" with a vainglorious ceremony. The prayer of the ritual which he approved was quietly inserted in the

1. E. K. Chambers. *Macheth*, in *loco*.

2. "The superstitious notion which, it is wonderful to think, prevailed so long in this country as to the virtue of the royal touch, a notion which our king encouraged," etc.—*Boswell's Life of Johnson*, Vol. I, p. 7. (London Edition.)

3. *Ibidem*.

4. *Lingard's History of England*, Character of James I, Vol. VII, p. 280. (Edinburgh Edition, 1902.)

*Book of Common Prayer*; but when in 1719 the practice had, in fine, become altogether discredited, it was as silently expunged.<sup>1</sup>

The custom of giving a gold coin to each one touched for the "evil" was introduced after St. Edward's time. The Poet's words, "hanging a golden stamp about their necks," is expressive of this custom as observed by King James. The coin then in use was called *angel*, because on its obverse was stamped the figure of the archangel Michael piercing the dragon. It continued to be coined down to the time of Cromwell. The prince of Morocco mentions it explicitly in his address to Portia:

. . . "They have in England  
A coin that bears the figure of an angel  
Stamped in gold." (M. Ven., II, vii.)

The value of the coin was ten shillings (\$2.50), and the common eagerness to be honored by the royal touch, led Sir Thomas Browne, a contemporary physician and author, to write facetiously, "the king's purse knows that the 'king's evil' grows more common."

Any belief in the royal pretension, as well as its practice, expired, in fine, with the reign of Queen Anne. One of Dr. Johnson's<sup>2</sup> earliest memories is that of his mother carrying him to London to be touched by the queen: the gold coin he received is preserved in the *British Museum*; but his scrofula, he, like many others, carried with him to the grave (ll. 139-159).

### A NEW ARRIVAL

While the prince is still speaking of good King Edward, his attention is called to an approaching stranger garbed in Scotch attire. Though recognizing him as a countryman, he,

1. Chambers in loco citato.

2. "Johnson used to talk of this very frankly. Being asked if he could remember Queen Anne, he said he had a confused, but somehow a solemn recollection of a lady in diamonds and a long black hood. I ventured to say to him, in allusion to the political principles in which he was educated, that his mother had not carried him far enough; she should have taken him to *Rome*."—Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, Vol. I, p. 7. (Edinburgh Edition, 1902.)

nevertheless, regards him with the same distrust as on first meeting with Macduff. As soon, however, as the latter advances and extends a hearty welcome to his cousin Ross, Malcolm rejects suspicion and also greets him as a friend. In eagerness they question the new arrival concerning the state of Scotland. Ross replies in a carefully prepared speech, which is rhetorical in style, and richly adorned with antithesis and metaphor. Alas! our poor country dares not look upon herself from fear. Once, our mother, she is now our grave. None but infants smile. Sighs and cries of suffering are no longer noted; for extreme affliction is the common lot of all. The dead pass unnoticed, and good men die before sprigs of heath wither in their "bonnets."

Admitting the truthfulness of his cousin's description, Macduff deems it too studied and artificial for a genuine utterance of deep feeling, and in hurried, anxious words questions concerning the safety of his wife and children. In the fear that the news of their slaughter may prostrate Macduff, Ross designs to break the blow by slow and gradual disclosure. Hence, he parries Macduff's anxious query by playing on the word "well" in its equivocal and euphuistic sense. We sometimes say the dead are well, as Macbeth in envious mood says of the murdered king:

"Duncan is in his grave;  
After life's fitful fever he sleeps *well*;  
Treason has done his worst; nor steel, nor poison,  
Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing,  
Can touch him further."

In shuffling "off this mortal coil," man "ends the heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to." A similar use of the term occurs in *Antony and Cleopatra*:

MESSENGER. Madam, madam, —

CLEOPATRA. Antony's dead?

If thou say so, villain, thou kill'st thy mistress.

MESSENGER. First, Madam, he is well.

CLEOPATRA. Why, there is more gold.

But, sirrah, mark, we use

To say, *the dead are well*. [Ant. & Cleop., II, v.]

Macduff, dissatisfied with his friend's laconic replies, voices his fears in the pointed question, "Has the tyrant battered at their peace?" Ross, however, still deeming his cousin unprepared for the terrible blow, seizes upon the word *peace* as opportune for further equivocation. The dead, it is true, are sometimes said to be *at peace*. The word is thus used by Scroop in his reply to King Richard II.:

"Their *peace* is made  
With heads and not with hands: those whom you curse  
Have felt the worst of death's destroying wound  
And lie full low, graved in the hollow ground." [Rich. II, iii, 2.]

The term is also used by Macbeth when, oppressed by harrowing fears, he feels envious of Duncan's peaceful repose:

"Better be with the dead  
Whom we to gain our peace, have sent *to peace*,  
Than on the torture of the mind to lie  
In restless ecstasy."

### WITHHOLDS SAD NEWS

The real meaning of Ross in the equivocal phrase, "the dead are well" and the "dead are at peace," is clear from multiplied passages throughout Shakespeare's works. That death like sleep brings rest to the weary is true of man's mortal element. After life's fitful fever his body lies in peaceful slumber in "the silent halls of death," till the grand awakening at the end of time. Not so, however, with his spiritual and immortal element; on abandoning its "mortal coil," or home of clay, the soul is ushered into the spirit world to receive what it has merited according to its well or ill-spent earthly life of probation.

This is all clear to Christian minds; but not so with others, who though living in our Christian civilization, are without Christian faith in the immortality of the soul and the future resurrection. If they imagine death to be the end all of man, in fact, his complete annihilation in the destruction of his soul and body, then in consigning his corpse, often in the first

stages of dissolution, to the crematory or to the grave, where it soon returns to the material elements from which it came, they cannot use the phrases, "peaceful rest" and "peaceful slumber," as the Christian who believes in the final awakening, but only in a sense unreal and meaningless. For them to speak of the corpse lying in the grave,

"Like one that wraps the drapery of his couch  
About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams,"

is in contradiction with their belief: dreams mean mental action, which is surely impossible to the inert corpse which, as they think, with soul destroyed, is now turning into ashes.

"Pleasant dreams" aptly recalls the soliloquy of Shakespeare's philosopher. To his Christian mind death had its joyful and its mournful side. If men sometimes long for dissolution, they also fear it. Hence, Hamlet, philosophizing on the common fear of death, generalizes the thought that "conscience does make cowards of us all;" because of "the dread of something after death," the dread of being "borne before an Everlasting Judge," in that

"Undiscovered country at whose sight  
The happy smile, and the accursed, damned."

The same fear of that "Everlasting Judge," whose sentence is in strict accord with justice, was the chief element that led Claudius to resort to prayer for repentance:

"In the corrupted currents of this world  
Offence's gilded hand may shove by justice  
And oft 't is seen the wicked prize itself  
Buys out the law: but 't is not so above;  
There is no shuffling, there the action lies  
In his true nature; and we ourselves compell'd  
Even to the teeth and forehead of our faults,  
To give in evidence." [Hamlet, III, iii.]

Macduff further irritated at Ross's brief and indefinite replies, censures his miserly use of words and earnestly

demands, "How goes it?" Ross gladly digresses to the state of Scotland, informing him that, while many nobles were gathering their clans to crush the usurper, the latter was marshaling his forces for defense. Macduff's return is now opportune; his presence in Scotland, he assures him, would alone suffice to create an army, and to arm even women in the effort to rid themselves of "their dire distresses."

Malcolm interrupts the speaker to "comfort" him with the glad news that by the favor of "gracious" Edward, he and "old Siward" with ten thousand veterans are about to invade Scotland for the purpose of relieving that suffering country by the overthrow of the bloody tyrant.

The frequent reference to the saintly Edward in the present scene, is not without its purpose. The crown prince, after the murder of his father, fled to England to his uncle Siward, the Earl of Northumberland; thence he proceeded to the English court, where the virtuous Edward welcomed him with high honor, sympathized in his misfortunes, and espousing his just cause, promised to enthrone him, the rightful King of Scotland. Throughout this lengthy scene not only are the woes of the neighboring kingdom, as well as the horrid crimes of the murderous usurper, repeatedly portrayed in strong colors, but King Edward of saintly character, pictured in marked contrast with the criminal Macbeth, is also frequently presented to our mental vision. This virtuous monarch is chosen by divine Providence as the vindicator of justice in the destruction of the blood-thirsty tyrant, and the restoration of the reign of law and order among a suffering Christian people. Hence, the saintly king, who was most averse to war and bloodshed, and who formerly refused to resort to arms in defence of his own just right to the English throne, now feels inspired to enter at least into one foreign conflict for the purpose of vindicating right and justice.<sup>1</sup>

The poet confers high praise upon "good Siward," the Earl of Northumberland; no commander in all Christendom, he avers, surpasses him in skill and experience in the art of war. On returning from his victory in Scotland, he was soon

1. Cf. Lingard's History of England, Vol. I, p. 345. (Edinburgh Edition.)

after attacked by a fatal disorder. So great, however, was his passion for arms that, regretting as a misfortune his dying in bed, he declared he would die as he had lived, like a warrior;<sup>1</sup> hence he demanded his armor and, arrayed in the accoutrements of war, expired sitting upright—leaning upon his spear.

### CHRISTENDOM

If from the frequent use of the term, the *idea of Christendom* appears to have possessed a special charm for Shakespeare, this charm may not be so apparent today, since under the changed conditions of our modern political and religious world, it has lost much of its former fascination. A little digression, therefore, in exposition may be permissible. *Christendom* is now taken in a quantitative sense, as merely denoting those parts of the world that are inhabited by Christians; or in other words, it comprehends every individual professing-Christian the world over, whether members of the olden faith or of the multiplied divergent Christian sects, even though devoid of cohesion and unity in doctrine and government. Not so, however, was Shakespeare's notion of Christendom. With him it stood for a polity as well as for a religion, for nations as well as for peoples. It banded together all Europe in a Christian federation, which inspired great deeds, dignified many centuries of history, and still exerts no little fascination over the minds of poets and historians.<sup>2</sup>

This ideal Christendom was greatly strengthened by St. Augustine's "*De Civitate Dei*." Its clear distinction between the two hostile kingdoms, the one of God and the other of his enemies, and its vivid portrayal of the history, dignity, and universality of the former, exercised a commanding influence during the Middle Ages. The Church in converting the western nations brought together the already divergent streams of national tendencies, and so laid the foundation of a European federation, in which the spirit of Christianity animated every individual and social element of human life. Its spirit per-

1. Ibidem. Also Alban Butler's Biography of Edward the Confessor, Vol. IV, p. 157.

2. Cf. Catholic Encyclopedia.

vaded philosophy, science, literature, art, and even the state itself, which while not ecclesiastical was strictly Christian. In this Christendom two independent but coördinate powers, the religious and the secular, laboring in harmony for the whole good of man—for his temporal and eternal interests—gave us a material, intellectual, and moral civilization, with the result that the history of Christendom is one with the history of civilization.

Christian cosmopolitanism reached its climax in the twelfth century, when clergy and laity were probably never so united since the early days of the Church. It was the age of Alexander III., who canonized Edward the Confessor, subdued the violence of Barbarossa, and compelled Henry II. to atone for the murder of the Archbishop of Canterbury. Soon famous schools scattered through Europe branched out under papal sanction into great universities, within whose walls were gathered professors and students from every nation, speaking a common language and possessing a common literature, which was read with equal ease from the shores of the Mediterranean to the North Sea.

At critical moments this ideal Christendom had been the only bond that linked the peoples of the European world. Only a generation after the demise of Edward the Confessor arose the crusades, which, as shown in his dramas, had a special charm for Shakespeare. They were essentially a papal enterprise. The idea of quelling all dissensions among Christians, and uniting them under the same standard against the hated Turk, originated with the popes, who alone were in a position to know and understand the common interests of the Christian world.

In this universal Christian federation kings, as well as their subjects, looked upon the papacy as the central court, often of first instance, but always of last resort. The amount of legal business that poured in upon it was a source of uneasiness to St. Bernard in the twelfth century. The movement was, however, irresistible; for the papacy had in fact become the center of a vast Christian nation, and to it kings freely appealed against kings, and subjects against tyrannic rulers.

Of the former, an example is had in King John's appeal to Innocent III. against Philip II. of France;<sup>1</sup> and of the latter, Shakespeare himself gives a striking illustration in the uncrowning of the same King John:<sup>2</sup>

KING JOHN. Thus have I yielded up into your hand  
The circle of my glory.

CARD. PANDULPH. Take again [*giving JOHN the crown*]  
From this my hand, as holding of the pope,  
Your sovereign greatness and authority. [*King John, V, i.*]

"King John," writes Macaulay, "was the worst of English monarchs; history reveals only his vices: his virtues, if such a monster could possess any virtues, were unseen or forgotten. He stands before us polluted with meanness, perjury, and cruelty. Arrogant in prosperity and abject in adversity, his heart was callous to every sentiment of pity, and his many victims never returned from their dungeons."<sup>3</sup> Revolting against his tyranny, the whole English people, led by the lords temporal and spiritual, appealed to the Father of Christendom, the universally acknowledged supreme arbiter between kings and their subjects. In vain King John fumed and raged against the pope, against bishops and nobles, and against the papal envoy, Cardinal Pandulph. Against his tyranny stood the insuperable moral power of Christendom, and in prudence he signed the great bill of rights known as *Magna Charta*. This document, says, Hallam, was the origin of our modern constitutional governments.

A contemporary of King John was Philip the Second of France. Having grown tired of his virtuous wife, he obtained a divorce from his own appointed court. When the queen, however, in defense of her rights, appealed to the head of Christendom, Philip continued contumacious until, his kingdom placed under interdict, he feared deposition and, in consequence, reinstated his lawful queen. As Philip is a leading character in the Poet's drama of King John, Shakespeare was undoubtedly cognizant of the incident, and it probably led him

1. Cf. Lingard's History of England, Vol. II, p. 306.

2. Ibidem, p. 331.

3. Cf. Also Lingard's History of England, Vol. II, p. 374.

to chronicle a parallel in the play of Henry VIII.<sup>1</sup> In complete sympathy with Queen Katharine, he makes her the heroine and adorns her with all the charms of his magic pencil. Standing in queenly majesty before the royal tribunal of the lustful monarch, she, in the consciousness that her cause is prejudged, utters her appeal to the sovereign of Christendom:

“I do refuse you for my judge, and here  
Before you all, appeal unto the pope  
To bring my whole cause 'fore his holiness  
And to be judged by him.” [Henry VIII, II, iv.]

### A POWERFUL CHARM

That this ideal Christendom of Middle Age Catholicism, should exercise a charm over Shakespeare's mind, can seem strange only to those of his readers who are unaware that the Poet “stood at the meeting point of the two great epochs of our history. A new political world was rising into being, a world more really national but less picturesque, less wrapt in the mystery and splendor that poets love. From this new world of thought and feeling, Shakespeare stood aloof, nor were the political sympathies of the Poet those of the coming times.”<sup>2</sup> “Shakespeare,” says Carlyle, “was the noblest product of Middle Age Catholicism, which was abolished as far as an act of parliament could abolish it.” An act of parliament, however, never converted a nation to a new religion. It is impotent to wipe out the traditions of ages and by a legal stroke obliterate from a peoples' minds and hearts the cherished beliefs and practices and glories of a thousand years.

There exists an assumption, too common with unreflecting non-catholic minds that, when under Elizabeth all England was proclaimed Protestant by a statute law of parliament,

1. All eminent critics agree that of Henry VIII Shakespeare composed only Act. I, sc. 1 and 2; Act II, sc. 3 and 4; Act III, sc. 2 (in part); Act V, sc. 1, comprising in all 1,146 lines; the other lines of the play, which number 1467, are assigned to Fletcher. Long before this conclusion was reached, “Dr. Johnson had the sagacity to observe that the genius of Shakespeare comes in and goes out with Catherine.”—Cf. Hudson's *Shakespeare's Life Art and Characters*, Vol. II, p. 176. Dowden's *Shakespeare, His Mind and Art*, p. 368, and Gervinus, *Shakespeare's Commentaries*, p. 825.  
2. Green's *History of the English People*, Chap. VII, N. 849.

the people at once welcomed and accepted the new religion. The transition from Catholicity to Protestantism was, nevertheless, a slow struggle lasting for a period of more than one hundred years, and for the accomplishment of which were invoked systematic misrepresentation, dark calumny, and persistent persecution. On the testimony of Macaulay, "the change of faith was prompted not so much by religious motives as by political exigencies and *against the will of the nation.*" "There is no reason to suppose that the nation as a body was discontented with the old religion. Facts point to the opposite conclusion. Had it been so, Mary would never have been allowed to ascend the throne. Long down into the reign of Elizabeth, according to a modern historian, the old faith still numbered a majority of adherents in England. This rooted attachment to the old faith and the difficulty everywhere experienced by the government in weaning the clergy and their flocks from their ancient tendencies is a sufficient proof that it was unpopular."<sup>1</sup> "There was no thought of protesting against the See of Rome until the king, for his own purpose, abolished the jurisdiction altogether. If the tone of the general literature and the new evidence supplied by the state papers is to be credited, it is impossible to maintain that the breach with Rome was popular—that is, that it was desired by the people at large, or indeed, by any considerable number who had not a personal motive—who did not in fact view it as a way leading to perspective personal gains."<sup>2</sup> Froude, the historian, writes without fear of error: "The whole spirituality of England protested against the establishment of the Anglican Church." To enforce it upon the people, the ministers of Elizabeth were driven to coercive measures by way of fines, confiscations, imprisonment, banishment, and executions."

1. England under the Old Religion, by Gasquet, p. 46. Cf. Letters and Papers of the Reign of Henry VIII, VI, p. 470, by Rev. J. S. Brewer, professor of English literature in King's College, 1855-77.

2. Ibidem, p. 93. Cf. also Dr. J. Gairdner, Lollardy and the Reformation, and again the History of the English Church in the Sixteenth Century.

3. Butler affirms that even at the accession of James the First a majority of the population of England was Catholic, and Riehton, that when Elizabeth came to the throne the Catholics were two-thirds of the nation." (Macaulay upon Nares's Memoirs of Lord Burghley.)

Considering all these circumstances, and furthermore, that Shakespeare's parents were faithful Catholics—"Recusants"<sup>1</sup>—who were more than once fined for refusal to attend the new worship; that he was educated in the classic school of the still Catholic town of Stratford,<sup>2</sup> a solution appears for facts that have never been satisfactorily explained: the one, that while treating with disrespect the *parsons* of the new State Church, so called to distinguish them from priests of the old religion, he portrays the Catholic clergy with dignity and respect, and especially the monks and nuns, so hated by the Reformers; and the other, that, while touching in so many of his dramas upon the doctrines, sacraments, rites, and ceremonies of the old religion, he never, like his young contemporary dramatists, falls into the smallest error. His education in the religion of his parents, moreover, explains his predilection for the glorious historic times of "Merry England." How his poetic mind must have glowed as his fancy revelled in the renowned exploits of English kings, knights, and nobles in their valiant contests with Saracens in oriental climes! How his national pride must have swelled with fervid enthusiasm when, as he gazed in mental vision upon the flower of English knighthood going forth with Richard Coeur-de-Lion, he saw them under the same standard of the cross, side by side with the armies of Philip Augustus of France and of Frederick Barbarossa of Germany, battling victoriously at Acre against the hordes of the crescent! The valiant deeds of Richard, the Lion-hearted, at once the terror and the admiration of the semi-barbarous Saracens, were long in after centuries the glorious burden of poetry and minstrel song in every royal court of Christendom.

His own admiration and sympathy for the crusaders of Christendom, Shakespeare could not fail to reflect in his dramas. When in his own day, England under the misgovernment of Elizabeth's minister, was groaning beneath the oppression of multiplied royal monopolies, he feelingly

1. Attested by State Papers preserved in London Office.

2. It was a high-class school for the time. Its head-master had a salary double that of the master of the famous school of Eton. (Cf. Shakespeare's Family, by Charlotte Stopes, C. VIII.)

contrasts her condition with the glorious days of olden times:

“This royal throne of kings, this sceptred isle,  
This fortress built by nature for herself,  
This precious stone set in the silver sea,  
Which serves it in the office of a wall,  
Renowned for her deeds as far from home  
For Christian service and true chivalry,  
As is the sepulchre in stubborn Jewry  
Of the world's ransom, blessed Mary's Son,  
*Is now leased out*, I die pronouncing it,  
*Like to a tenement or pelting<sup>1</sup> farm.*” [Rich. II, II, i.]

His reverence and esteem for the noble crusaders—“the soldiers of Christ”—he again expresses in the sympathetic lines dedicated to the Duke of Norfolk:

“Many a time hath banished Norfolk fought  
For Jesu Christ in glorious Christian field,  
Streaming the ensign of the Christian cross  
Against black pagans, Turks and Saracens:  
And toil'd with works of war, retired himself  
To Italy; and there at Venice gave  
His body to that pleasant country's earth,  
And his pure soul unto his captain Christ,  
Under whose colors he had fought so long.”  
[Rich. II, Act IV, 1.]

It is not, therefore, surprising that, when desirous of lauding another famous warrior, the Poet should extend his vision beyond his own little isle, which was but a unit of universal Christendom, in search for one among its world-renowned chieftains, who in valor and prowess of arms could overmatch old Siward, the Earl of Northumberland. But he finds:

“An older and a better soldier (there is) none  
That Christendom gives out.”

1. Paltry, petty.

## BREAKS THE SAD NEWS

To return to the text, we note that the glad tidings of an English army ready awaiting orders to march against the tyrant, has cheered the spirits of Macduff as well as of Ross; and, therefore, the latter concludes the moment propitious for breaking the long-withheld news. He does not, however, blurt out the massacre immediately, but with the kind intent of lessening the blow, he pictures its appalling horror. The dread news is so terrible that it should be cried out nowhere save in the desert wild, where no human ear could catch it. Its frightful nature will afflict every honest heart, even though the main part pertains to Macduff alone. In an instant, the latter guesses it, and at once Ross tells the savage slaughter in a few hurried words, but withholds the cruel circumstances, lest they should heighten Macduff's grief beyond endurance.

When stunned and staggered by the blow, Macduff, silent and overpowered by anguish of heart, seeks to conceal his agony, Malcolm exclaims, "Merciful heaven! what, man! ne'er pull your hat upon your brows." Stifle not your sorrow; vent it forth: supreme grief, that suppressed broods in silence, breaks the heart. Heedless of his words, the sorrow-stricken father with heart racked with pain and with mind all absorbed in his grief can only mutter, "My children, too? and I must be from thence!" When Malcolm attempts to soothe his keen sufferings by suggesting that he make the murderer's punishment the antidote of his grief, his words, expressive of the sentiments of a man who "has no children," fall discordantly upon the ears of the grief-stricken thane. If the prince, he thinks, were a father, he would comprehend a father's grief—comprehend that the "medicine of revenge" can not heal so great a grief.

Upon our modern stage the words are commonly referred to Macbeth on the supposition that, as "he has no children," Macduff can not take an adequate revenge. Different, however, was the practice in Garrick's time, "when the most famous actors, Wilks and Ryan, saw in the words only the deepest expression of paternal agony, out of which Macduff

arises only by degrees to composure and the desire of revenge.” The hypothesis that Macbeth had no children, appears contrary to historic fact, as well as to evidence intrinsic to the play. Explicit mention is made of Lulach, the son of Macbeth, by Buchanan, a Scotch historian. An eminent scholar and the famous tutor of James I., he published in Edinburgh in 1582 his *Rerum Scoticarum Historia*, and in it we read: “While these things were done, the survivors of Macbeth hailed his son Lulach king when he was led to Scone,”<sup>1</sup> the place where Scottish kings were usually enthroned. The historian’s authority is strengthened by the testimony of Lady Macbeth in the words:

. . . “I have given suck and know  
How tender ’t is to love the babe that milks me.”

Furthermore, other evidence is offered by Macbeth himself. We see him, when assured of security in the enjoyment of royal honors, revelling in the joyous thought as follows:

. . . “Sweet bodement! good!  
. . . Our high-placed Macbeth  
Shall live the lease of nature, pay his breath  
To time and mortal custom.”

His joy is, however, soon embittered as upon his mind surges the unwelcome thought that the Fates have decreed the crown to pass to “Banquo’s issue,”—“no son of his succeeding.” Had he no son, the last words were surely meaningless; were he childless, the crown would, in consequence, naturally and necessarily pass to another family, and, therefore, accepting the consequence so obvious and inevitable, he would neither be harassed by the decree, nor would he strain after the impossible—the transmission of the crown to a son non-existent. Under such circumstances, he would rather favor “Banquo’s issue;” he knew him to be an honorable man, a tried and trusted friend, and as a brave fellow-commander to be emi-

1. “Haec dum Forfaræ geruntur, qui supererant Macbethi, filium ejus Lulachum (cui ex ingenio cognomen inditum erat Fatuo) Sconum ductum regem appellant.” (Shakespeare Variorum, in loco.)

nently fit. His opposition, therefore, arises from his own ambitious desire to have the crown descend lineally to his own posterity. Hence, in feverish excitement he broods in the spirit of rebellion over the decree of the Fates, until it afflicts his soul even unto madness and murder. His desperation is revealed in the passionate soliloquy in which in bitterness of heart he complains that the Fates, by depriving him of lineal succession, have given him a "fruitless crown" and "a barren sceptre." The thought that he has murdered Duncan and given over his immortal soul to Satan, to make, not his own, but "the seed of Banquo kings," so inflames his mind to frenzied rebellion that he challenges Fate to enter the lists against him. In madness he resolves to frustrate the decree by murderously striking down the two that shall prevent the crown from passing lineally to his own posterity. The escape of Fleance, however, frustrates his design, and later, when in the cavern he feels his heart expand with joy at the promises of evil spirits, it is the one flaw that mars his complete happiness:

. . . "Yet my heart  
Throbs to know one thing: tell me, if your art  
Can tell so much: Shall Banquo's issue ever  
Reign in this kingdom?"

If there still remain a doubt, whether the textual phrase, "he has no children," should be referred to Macbeth or to Malcolm, turn we in fine to the Poet himself; he surely knows best his own meaning, and he has expressed it—the same idea under the same circumstances—in his previous drama of King John. Lady Constance, in a paroxysm of grief, enters upon the scene; and, when in the presence of King Philip of France and Cardinal Pandulph, she affectingly bewails the loss of her son, Prince Arthur, they strive to calm and to comfort her:

KING PHILIP. Patience, good Lady! Comfort, gentle Constance.

CARDINAL PANDULPH. You hold too heinous a respect of grief.

LADY CONSTANCE. He talks to me *that never had a son*.

[King John, III, iv.]

In these lines, the bereaved Constance bears the same relation to Macduff as the Cardinal bears to Malcolm. Both the latter, when counselling grief-stricken parents to take "comfort," the one a mother and the other a father, received the same significant reply: "he talks to me that has no children."—None but a father can fathom a father's grief.

### THE STRICKEN THANE

The prince, though perceiving the thane's distracted state and anguish of heart, as revealed in passionate words of affection and supreme grief, still fails to fathom the depths of his paternal affliction; and, in consequence, appeals to him as a man, and not as a father, that mindful of his manhood he battle bravely against his overpowering grief rather than yield thereto. Again, there is the courteous reply: though I do strive manfully against it, nevertheless, I must feel it as a man who, endowed with human feelings and bound by the dearest human ties, must be sensitive to the cruel blow, which has robbed me of all that was most precious in life.

Like good Christians who, sometimes, while in a mental disturbance induced by the throes of an overwhelming grief, speak querulously or harshly of God for non-interference, so the afflicted father questions how heaven could look on and yet remain inactive. Such sentiments are excusable, when arising from a mental distraction, caused by an agony of grief. In saner moments the Christian recognizes the fact that man, in the natural order of his earthly existence, is subject to all the conditions and vicissitudes of life, with which Providence does not interfere supernaturally, or by way of miracle, save very rarely and under peculiar circumstances. This thought soon beams on Macduff, and begets lowly sentiments, which stir him to reflect on his own "naught," or unworthiness. The thought leads him in an humble spirit of resignation to confess that he is stricken for his own sinfulness, and not for the "demerits" of his loved ones. Influenced by such Christian sentiments, he naturally thinks of the welfare of his dear ones in the other life and, in the spirit of his Catholic Faith, prays devoutly, May God rest their souls!

In the plays of Shakespeare, the term *heaven* frequently occurs as synonymous with the word God, or the Supreme Being, or the Sovereign of heaven, or Divine Providence. In illustration, we have in the present citation, "merciful heaven,"—"heaven rest them now," and "heaven forgive him." Again, in *All's Well that Ends Well*, the Countess in reference to her son, who has abandoned his wife, speaks of the Virgin Queen of heaven, whose prayers God delights to hear and loves to grant:

. . . "What angel shall  
Bless this unworthy husband? he cannot thrive,  
Unless her prayers, whom *heaven* delights to hear,  
And loves to grant, relieve him from the wrath  
Of greatest justice." [III, iv.]

This substitution is, on the authority of Clarendon, accounted for by an act of Parliament passed in the reign of James I., which inflicted severe penalties for profanity on the stage; in consequence of that enactment, the word *God* occurring in the original manuscripts was probably in the actor's copy changed to *heaven* or some other synonym for the sake of avoiding even the appearance of profanity (ll. 192-227).

At the close of the scene, Malcolm and Macduff are represented in changed positions. At the opening, when the latter was all intent on urging the prince to assert his right to the crown, and to redress his country's wrongs, he met with the indifferent reply:

. . . "What I can redress  
As I shall find the time to friend, I shall."

As Macduff continued with great fervor to incite Malcolm to action, his patriotic efforts were curbed by the prince's pretence of unfitness for the kingly office. But, now when Macduff, lost subjectively in his bereavement, is so totally oblivious of the objective world about him, as to lose all thought of his former purpose and even of revenge, Malcolm with difficulty awakens him from the emotional world, which enthralls him to

the outer world of realities and action. Let him, he pleads, turn his grief to anger, which, instead of blunting, shall enrage the heart and sharpen the sword of revenge. Macduff, in reply admits that, in his overmastering grief, he could weep as a woman, or like a braggart boast in uproarious voice of his awful and dire revenge. But, no; instead he invokes the powers of heaven to set him without delay face to face with the fiend of Scotland, and if his thirsty sword drink not the monster's blood, let himself be rated as great a criminal as the murderous usurper, and then may God forgive them both.

The prince approves with delight the stricken thane's new and manly tone, and decides upon an instant conference with the king. The army in all readiness is expecting hourly the word of command, and the tyrant already ripened in crime, is awaiting his doom. As the conflict is that of heaven against the hell-hound of violence and blood, the prince calls on Providence to set afoot His avenging forces. Let Macduff be cheerful: the long night of Scotland's affliction shall soon be banished by the sunrise of justice and gladness (ll. 228-240).

## ACT FIFTH

### SCENE FIRST

#### SECRET STINGS OF CONSCIENCE

From the last scene, which pictured the clouds of war gathering against the tyrant, we pass to another in striking contrast. From suppressed whisperings, heard in the calm stillness of Lady Macbeth's private apartments, we learn of the avenging Nemesis that invisibly torments her. The transition from verse to prose has given rise to various suggestions. One author supposes that Shakespeare deemed prose more proper to the broken utterances of sleep-walking; while another suspects "that the matter of this scene is too sublime, too austere, grand to admit of anything so artificial as the measured language of verse; and that, as from an instinct of genius, he felt that any attempt to heighten the effect by any arts of delivery would impair it." Though either reason is sufficient to warrant a transition, nevertheless, the speeches of the physician have a cadence verging on and almost gliding into blank verse, a kind of rhythmical prose, says Delius, which, with the view of softening the change, Shakespeare frequently employs in passing from one to the other.

After the disappearance of Lady Macbeth in the Third Act, the Poet left her fears and sufferings to our conjectures, until in the present scene he reintroduces her strolling in troubled sleep, like a restless ghost, through dark and silent chambers. "Of all poets, Shakespeare is unexcelled in portraying emotions arising from the realization of shattered hopes and irreparable ruin." At his touch, the overwhelming grief of Othello, the helpless wretchedness of Lear, and the desolation and remorse of Lady Macbeth, become terrible, and yet extremely touching and pathetic. His delineation of the secret torture of his heroine, as arising from consciousness of

secret guilt and the silent stings of conscience, seem, however, to transcend all other tragic conceptions. Its artistic purpose is not only to unveil the true personality of the woman who, from an ambitious yearning for the diadem, had done great violence to her feminine nature, but also to reveal the inherent power for good which lay dormant in one so richly endowed.

That her towering bravery, which shamed and repelled with haughty scorn the haunting fears and terrors of her husband; that her superhuman audacity, stimulated by her ruling passion, and strengthened preternaturally by the evil spirits whom she had invoked, were only assumed, were only the mock courage of a feminine mind, strong and ardent, but blinded by the master-passion of ambition, is disclosed in the present scene, when, by sighs and gasps swelling from her tortured heart, she reveals in her sleepless agony what she had sacrificed, and how violent was the struggle to subjugate a nobler nature, born for higher good and utterly unequal to the appalling feelings of remorse.

If she suffers more keenly than her husband, it is not merely, because her womanly physical nature is weaker than his, but, because she perceives that, having wrested from her hand the control of affairs, he needs her no further, and, in consequence, leaves her alone to gloomy thoughts and melancholy brooding. Even before the royal banquet, when she observed his beginning to live his life apart, she openly chided him for wonted aloofness in words which also betrayed her own mental sufferings.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, she noticed his inclination to independent action, when he refused to make her his confident in his plot for Banquo's destruction. From this time forth, their lives grew daily more estranged; and when evil spirits had by false promises of safety and success, uplifted his drooping spirits, and changed his fears to exulting hopes, he felt no need of other counsel, and sought no more her presence and her sympathy. Hence, while his life was daily distracted from the thought of guilt by ceaseless activity in affairs of state, and in bloody strife in defense of his

1. Act. III, sc. 2, l. 8-12.

crown, she was left alone in the solitude of the castle to brood over awful memories face to face with conscience. The dread secret, closely guarded, barred her from all sympathy, and as a solitary, with mournful thoughts for sole companions, she perforce bore in silence the burden of remorse—a burden which she felt would be more tolerable, if she enjoyed her husband's trust and confidence. But, day after day, she passed in loneliness and meditative melancholy, wholly ignorant of her husband's doings in the world without, save when chance whisperings told of some new horror, which brought the shuddering conviction that by his bloody course he was driving both to ruin and despair.

Through these long, lonely days, her fevered mind, preoccupied with the crime to which she was driven by love and ambition, ruminates unceasingly upon the past. Now, she herself, by strange irony, suffers the fears and foreseen evils which, in audacity and scorn she had flouted in her vacillating husband. By day, she feels her breast aflame with a consuming fire, and continually recalls in vivid fancy the real and terrible events of the crime; and by night, walking in sleepless wanderings, she acts over again in imagination the incidents of that horrid night.

The scene opens upon a room in the castle of Dunsinane, where a physician and a lady of the court are watching through the night in expectation of seeing the queen walking in sleep. Macbeth has been absent from the castle for a considerable time in consequence of a report that the nobles were deserting him. The thanes, hostile to the tyrant, had no doubt received secret information that an English army was on the march to invade Scotland for the overthrow of the usurper, and were urged to gather their clans and join the invading forces. Macbeth, however, through numerous spies, was made aware of their hostile purpose, and had taken the field in person to quell the rising insurrection. During his absence, the mental malady of the queen had daily grown more acute and, in consequence, a physician was summoned to observe her movements, and if possible to diagnose her secret trouble, and prescribe a remedy. His presence in the castle must have

been known to Lady Macbeth. Having heard from her maids of her sleep-walking, and even of some of her words, she had likely, in anxiety to guard the dread secret, resolved upon special efforts against the practice; and the resolve of her once iron will was effective till the third night.

### NIGHT-WATCHERS

In the meanwhile, the physician had grown skeptical; after watching for two nights, he had noticed nothing to confirm the report. In his doubt, he questions the Lady-in-waiting and learns that, since the king's absence, Lady Macbeth has been accustomed to rise nightly and write a letter in her sleep. This letter has reference, it is thought, to the one she received from her husband concerning the first apparition of the Weird Sisters; but another opinion, which seems preferable, supposes that her writing indicates her desire to communicate with her husband, who has taken the field against his enemies. Having long assumed the mastery in directing his ambitious fortunes, she, from force of habit, is still striving to guide him in her dreams.

The physician's questionings concerning her utterances in sleep, are prompted not so much by curiosity as by his professional calling; as symptoms of her mental unrest, her words might enable him to discover its origin or cause. The Lady-in-waiting refuses to report what she had heard, implying that it is of such a grave nature, and so compromising in character as to forbid her to commit herself by repeating it, save on the surety of a witness (ll. 1-16).

The gentlewoman, while still in converse with the physician, is the first to notice the silent entrance of Lady Macbeth, and exclaims: "Look! here she comes and fast asleep." Stand back in concealment, and watch her closely. The queen in a dressing gown advances slowly and silently, holding a lighted taper in the right hand, her left outstretched as one with outspread fingers feeling his way in darkness. Her pallid corpse-like countenance stamped with the sorry marks of continued nightly vigils, her parched lips that speak her burning fever of remorse, and her open sightless eyes that, robbed of

the old-time fire, gaze into space in a fixed and vacant stare, tell her soul's overwhelming desolation. Barefoot, and noiseless as a specter, she walks, pausing ever and anon, as in mysterious ghostly tones she whispers, now faintly breathing, now gasping forth in heaving bosom, the secret anguish of her heart. In appearance, less a living being than a corpse endowed with utterance, she resembles in her restless sleepless strolling, a harassed soul that returns to haunt the earthly scenes of her former sinful life. Hers was the plot to strike Duncan in his sleep, and by that murderous blow she has, by a strange but just judgment, ~~also murdered sleep~~, and, in consequence, she is forever more denied nature's needful repose :

“The sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleeve of care,  
The death of each day's life, sore labor's bath,  
Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course.”

From the maid we learn how the queen, in fear of darkness, insists on having a lighted taper near her through the night. This horror of darkness readily recalls by contrast her former bravado, when she summoned “thick night” to come in the pall of “the dunnest smoke of hell.” Painful now is the memory of those evil spirits, whom she had so impiously welcomed to her breast, those “murdering ministers, sightless substances” that in darkness ever “wait on nature's mischief,” and likely her red-handed guilt rouses a dread of their horrid presence or of the ghosts of the murdered victims. Having set down the lighted taper, she begins seemingly to wash her hands, an action which, we are informed, she frequently repeats and often for a quarter of an hour. Her efforts, however, proving ineffectual, she in surprise and horror still sees a bloody spot and utters words in betrayal of her guilty secret, words which in wakeful hours she would never speak for all the fabulous wealth of “Ormus or of Ind.” But her will, though naturally powerful, is now helpless in sleep, and, in consequence, under the complete sway of a fevered and disturbed imagination, she whispers incoherent phrases, which, without historical sequence, seem broken and jumbled together like misfit elements in some fantastic dream.

## SLEEP-WALKING

Lady Macbeth's somnambulistic walking is the enactment of her dreams. Whatever she sees, or hears, or does, is but the mere embodiment or repetition of former powerful impressions, which for the time sway her fancy. Hence her words and actions are in strict conformity with images conjured up by an intensely excited imagination. This organic faculty forms material images or phantasms of objects perceived by the exterior senses, and even joins them into new combinations. Phantasms are not isolated images. In their formation they are usually associated with others and, in consequence, when one phantasm is aroused other conjunctive images are thereby excited. While awake, Lady Macbeth could at will regulate the workings of her fancy, but in sleep, when the senses are closed to the outer world of realities, she is left alone in the presence of the inner world of dreams or unrealities, in which image after image of a disturbing nature is conjured up, and combined anew by her abnormally excited imagination.

As these images are reflected by her actions and whispered accents, they are seen, though massed together incoherently, to contain three elements of weird harmony: the thought of the murder, the fear of discovery, and remorse of conscience. In the first series of these phantasms, she lives over again the vivid scenes of that fatal night of Duncan's murder:

"One, two; why then 't is time to do it."

"Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?"

When her husband, the murder done, had with bloody hands rushed into her presence in excitement and delirious terror, she made an effort to calm and recall him to his senses, in the words:

"These deeds must not be thought  
After these ways: so it will make us mad."

Then she had not realized the horrid nature of the crime; but now, that its foulness and enormity are seen by her

awakened conscience, she reveals in delirious dreams that she herself is affected by the same terror and horror of the deed. Pausing and listening breathlessly, she slowly counts again, in a strange unnatural whisper, the strokes of the bell, which was the appointed signal that all was auspicious for the murderous blow. Her fancy, distracted for a moment by a few incongruous phantasms, returns again to the scene of the crime. Once more in fancy she seizes the daggers from the trembling hand of her terrified husband, and goes to "gild the faces of the grooms." Then, in the thought that "the sleeping and the dead are but as pictures," she gazed without horror upon the old king suffused in his life's blood, and imbued her hands therein; but now, the scene affects her with a shudder, as painfully she whispers her surprise, "That the old man had so much blood in him." Duncan's murder readily suggests another, which followed from it, and for which as *particeps criminis* she holds herself equally accountable. Her natural womanly feeling for the murdered innocent mother and children, she discloses as she whispers in mournful, melancholy tones of regret, "The thane of Fife had a wife; where is she now?"

Another series of images which crowds upon her fancy relate to the scenes wherein she labored to keep her terrified husband from betraying his guilt:

"Fie, my lord, fie; a soldier and afeared? what need we fear  
Who knows it when none can call our power to account?  
Wash your hands; put on your night-gown; look not so pale.  
To bed, to bed; there 's knocking at the gate: come, come, come,  
Come, give me your hand: to bed, to bed, to bed."

These words, indicative of the nature of her phantasms, show that she is living again in fancy through that crucial scene after the murder, when her husband standing dazed and trembling in the grasp of fear and terror, she attempted to rally him by appealing to her own presence of mind and fearless courage. In her dream, however, she reminds him of his own boasted valor that should know no fear, and, furthermore, suggests that no power in the kingdom can call a

supreme monarch to account. In that scene, as now in sleep, when her intellect is hampered, she had no thought of the King of Kings, that invisible higher Power, who as Master of every human conscience vindicates His violated laws in this life as well as in the world to come; in this life as seen by the pangs of remorse, which, racking her soul day and night, induce a delirium of unrest. Again in disturbed imagination she hears that loud knocking at the gate, which once filled her with fear and dismay, and reaching out in trepidation for her husband's hand, she in imagination hurries him panic-stricken from the scene, while whispering in tremulous accents those words of unconscious irony: "Wash your hands! put on your night-gown!" Formerly she did not feel the force of her husband's words when, standing affrighted in frenzied remorse, and staring with glaring eyeballs at his bloody hands, he exclaimed:

"What hands are here? ha! they pluck out mine eyes!  
Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood  
Clean from my hand? No; this my hand will rather  
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,  
Making the green one red."

From fear of exposure, which overcame the guilty pair in that memorable scene, her fancy by way of association, next conjures up other phantasms of a kindred nature. Seated again in vivid imagination at the banquet table, she sees her husband overpowered by terror, when pointing at the ghost of "blood-boltered Banquo," he utters tell-tale words. Their memory startles her, and again in fearful anxiety she whispers in alarm: "No more o' that, my lord, no more o' that: you mar all with this starting.—I tell you yet again Banquo's buried; he cannot come out on's grave." This last sentence she had not uttered at the banquet scene. It is the product of her present overwrought imagination, which in sleep is uncontrolled by judgment or reason. In her waking hours she was well aware that disembodied souls, when permitted to return to earth, do not resume their buried and corrupting bodies, but by preternatural power clothe themselves in some

aerial, shadowy form in resemblance to that of their human life.

The third series of phantasms that agitates her overwrought imagination, relates to her overpowering sense of guilt and pangs of remorse:

“Yet here ’s a spot! — Out damned spot! out, I say! —  
Hell is murky.—What, will these hands ne’er be clean?  
Here ’s the smell of the blood still: all the perfumes of  
Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. Oh, oh, oh! —  
What is done cannot be undone.”

These phrases are interjected here and there, as the panorama of former distressing scenes crowd through her imagination. From each harrowing image, or representation she frequently reverts to her present pitiful condition, and gives expression to her secret sufferings. Tortured by day with remorse of conscience, she is by night the victim of a riotous imagination, which perceives the repulsive smell of blood upon her hands, and its presence affects her with a feeling of intense horror and revulsion. “The sense of smell,” says Verplanck, “has never been successfully used as a means of impressing the imagination with terror, pity, or any of the deeper emotions, except in this dreadful sleep-walking scene of the guilty queen, and in one parallel scene of the Greek drama, as wildly terrible as this. It is that passage of the Agamemnon of Aeschylus, where the captive prophetess, wrapt in visionary inspiration, scents first the smell of blood and then the vapors of the tomb breathing from the palace of Atrides, as ominous of his approaching murder. These two stand alone in poetry.”

The sight of innocent blood upon her hand, moreover, haunts her imagination, and finding the tell-tale spot, despite repeated rubbings and washings, ineradicable, she whispers in impassioned accents of exasperation and horror, “Out damned spot! out, I say!” The bloody spot is the image of the guilty stain upon her soul, and is, therefore, a “damned spot,” because it speaks her condemnation. Formerly she proved her Christian belief in hell, the home of evil spirits, when in the firm resolve of lofty ambition she not only summoned their

aid, but also invoked "the dunnest smoke of hell" to come and pall her contemplated crime with its thick pitchy blackness; and now in vivid fancy, she sees in dream that horrid prison, sniffs its dense smoke, feels its murkiness, and in shuddering horror whispers, "Hell is murky." For the attainment of an unhallowed ambition, she had deliberately and voluntarily separated herself from God, rejected Him in favor of the denizens of hell; and final separation from God, the supreme good, is hell.

### HELL IS MURKY

If Lady Macbeth's orthodox notion of hell seems repugnant to many of our day, it is perhaps due to the forgetfulness of the important truth that hell or eternal punishment is not decreed by an arbitrary or despotic power. It is an intrinsic necessity arising from the perfection of God and the willful apostacy of man. If God be holy, just, pure, true, and unchangeable, then, if the man who is impure, unjust, unholy, and false, will not change by repentance, it follows that, as light and darkness cannot coexist, so neither can God and that human soul unite in eternity. Eternal punishment is, therefore, not a statute law, but an intrinsic necessity, arising on the one hand from the divine perfection, and on the other, from the human soul persevering impenitently in sin. The holiness of God and the sinfulness of man clearly demonstrate the intrinsic necessity of an eternal separation. And what is hell but to be separated from God eternally? Man was created for God, his supreme good, and the lost soul will hunger and thirst after that supreme good when to be united with God will be impossible forever. As breathing is a vital necessity of the body, so union with God is a vital necessity for the eternal happiness of the soul. This loss of God engenders remorse—the consciousness that the soul has committed self-murder, that it sinned unto death of its own free will, and that without constraint or necessity it broke its link of union with God. In this eternal separation the worm that dieth not, the perpetual tooth of remorse, afflicts the soul with an anguish which no human heart can conceive, an anguish

so poignant and overpowering as to exceed the pain of sense itself.<sup>1</sup>

→ The dreams of Lady Macbeth in the sleep-walking scene, are but a reflex of emotions during her waking hours, and disclose that hers is a remorse merging into despair. This she betrays in the phrases, "all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand," and "what's done cannot be undone." Her mental anguish is revealed when, groping her way in the dimly lighted chamber, she in horrid convulsive shudderings utters in prolonged agonizing sighs, "oh, oh, oh!" They seem the heart-piercing sighs of a lost soul hopelessly immersed in despair, and cause the physician and maid to fall back in fear and dismay; the former exclaiming, "What a sigh was there!" and the latter, "I would not have such a heavy-laden heart in my bosom for all the dignity of the queenship."

Lady Macbeth's appalling cries of anguish have recalled to certain commentators the pathetic last days of Queen Elizabeth, as recorded by Sir John Carey. "She took my hand, wrung it hard and said, 'no Robin, I am not well,' and while discoursing fetched out not less than forty or fifty great sighs. I had never known her to sigh, but when the Queen of Scots was beheaded." Sir John Harrington, her godson, found her, on his visit, altered in features and reduced to a skeleton. She stamped with her feet and swore violently at the objects of her anger. The sword which she kept beside her, she often thrust with violence into the tapestry of her chamber. During the paroxysms of her disorder she had been alarmed at the frightful phantoms conjured up by imagination, and writes Mrs. Southwell, her maid of honor: "She obstinately refused to return to her bed, and sat both day and night on a stool bolstered up with cushions, having her finger in her mouth and her eyes fixed on the floor." Lord Cecil, her prime minister, made public the report that she was stricken with madness. When the lord admiral, a blood-relation, urged her to return to bed, the Queen replied that, if he had seen what she saw there, he would never make the request. When Cecil

1. Cf. *Sin and Its Consequences*, by Card. Manning, p. 63 et passim.

asked if she had seen spirits, she refused to reply. In secret she told the lord admiral in piteous tones: "My lord, I am tied with an iron collar about my neck." When he sought to console her, she replied, "No; I am tied and the case is altered with me."<sup>1</sup>

If remorse be defined as a keen anguish of mind, a compunction for crime committed, Lady Macbeth in sleep-walking undoubtedly exhibits by word and action a supreme remorse of conscience. If in wakeful hours, when in full command of her faculties, she guarded well the cause of her affliction, in sleep, when the imagination and not the will is in full control, she, like many great criminals, unconsciously betrays her sense of guilt and the mental sufferings consequent upon it. Compunction, however, may be natural or supernatural. It is natural, if arising from merely human motives, as when one is grief-stricken, not because of the violation of a law of God, but by reason of disastrous consequences, such as temporal loss, or disgrace, or suffering. Such was the remorse of King Antiochus, a murderer and blasphemer.<sup>2</sup> Stricken by Divine Justice with a horrible disease, he bewailed his wickedness in compunctious prayer; but his repentance was insincere, because prompted by his sufferings, and not by sorrow for his sins against God. Compunction, on the other hand, is supernatural, when on the promptings of divine Faith, it arises from fear of punishment by reason of an offense against God, our greatest benefactor and supreme good. It must necessarily include hope of pardon, which is founded on God's infinite mercy. "To despair of God's mercy," affirms St. Augustine, "is to dishonor God's infinite perfection." Pardon of sin is inculcated by multitudinous assurance in Sacred Scripture: "Turn to me and I will turn to you, saith the Lord."<sup>3</sup> "I desire not the death of the sinner but that he be converted and live."<sup>4</sup> "If your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made white as snow: and if they be red as crimson, they shall be white as wool."<sup>5</sup>

1. Cf. Lingard's History of England, Vol. VI. C. IX, p. 644.

2. 2 Mach. IX.

3. Zach. 1:3.

4. Ezek. 33:11.

5. Is. 1:18.

REMORSE WITHOUT REPENTANCE

As belief in God's merey on condition of repentance, is a fundamental doctrine of Christianity, it may seem surprising that Lady Macbeth, as a Christian woman, should, while exhibiting deep remorse, disclose no sentiment of true repentance. Hers, on the contrary, seems a despair like that of the first murderer, who deemed his crime too great to be forgiven. Though Lady Macbeth's religion was that common to her people, it seemed to have exercised but little influence upon her daily life, and that little was more theoretical than practical. The drama offers no evidence that she was a religious woman with mind deeply imbued and strengthened by religious principles, and with will tutored to restraint and habituated to the observance of the moral order in matters antagonistic to her cherished passion. That her conscience was not delicately sensitive of evil, is evidenced in the fact that in the contemplated crime, she considered neither its heinous offense against God, nor its future punishment, but was wholly engrossed in escaping detection. Her conscience, though stunted in growth, was not, however, atrophied, and accordingly, in the fear that its action might impede the perpetration of a bloody crime, which was naturally most repulsive to her refined feminine nature, she resorts to the aid of evil spirits, whom she prays to strengthen her against its voice of remonstrance. Their agency was powerful with a woman who, weak in the practice of religion, was, moreover, by nature, proud, haughty, self-willed, imperious, and who never brooked opposition. Such a woman would regard but little the law of God, which forbade her unholy reaching out for the cherished idol of her heart. Ambition was naturally her ruling passion and, as a part of her nature, she loved it, nurtured it, and brooding long over the object of her aspirations, came to look upon the diadem as the only thing worthy of her life; and, in consequence, yearning after it as her supreme good, she became oblivious of all other interests of this life and the next, and was, therefore, ready to sacrifice all for "the golden round" that meant her elevation to the summit of human honor, power, and glory.

Thus inclined, her affinity for evil attracted kindred evil spirits, those "sightless substances that wait on nature's mischief." Knowing her ruling passion as well as her husband's, and perceiving her enslaved by "the concupiscence of the eyes and the pride of life," they divined her fallow soul to be fruitful soil for seeds of diabolical temptation, and accordingly inspired her to invoke their aid, and willfully to yield up her soul to them for the attainment of her royal aspirations. Hence, with perfect self-control, domineering energy, abetted by an iron will, and imagination dazzled by the diadem, she not only resolves upon the crime, but even summons them as auxiliaries from hell, to come and make her womanly nature an adamant rock against every assault of conscience and every revulsion of human feeling:

"Come, you spirits  
That tend on mortal thoughts, make thick my blood:  
Stop up the access and passage to remorse,  
That no compunctious visitings of nature  
Shake my fell purpose."

Responsive to her unhallowed invocation, they came, and true to their malicious nature, "filled her with direst cruelty that no compunctious visitings of nature" thwart her resolve. Their course of temptation is that usual with votaries of human power and glory.<sup>1</sup> Alluring her senses and imagination, they magnify the worth of the object yearned for as her supreme good, and fascinating her fancy with the glamor of the dazzling diadem, they insist that no obstacle need impede her grasping the coveted prize; they cunningly persuade her that the crime so easy of performance, is equally easy of concealment; they insinuate that "a little water will clear her of the deed;" they blind her to the fatal effects surely consequent upon the crime; and by inflaming her passionate ambition and bewitching her imagination with a glowing but exaggerated vision of royalty, they distract her mind from reflection upon the enormity of the crime and its future punishment.

1. Rules for Discernment of Spirits, by St. Ignatius Loyola, Rules 1 & 14.

.But after the excitement consequent upon the crime had passed, and her brow was adorned with the coveted diadem, came the unforeseen but inevitable hour of reaction. Her conscience, startled into vigorous action and asserting itself in a surprising manner, cried aloud in denunciatory tones, which she could neither ignore nor drown. Her eyes, moreover, were opened like the primal offender's, and she was disillusioned and disappointed in the prize and the happiness she had imagined it to bring. She had dreamed that "the golden round" was synonymous with supreme honor and happiness; but it brought her nought but supreme misery. Even before the banquet, when crowned with the "round and top of sovereignty," she began to realize that the specious fruit within her grasp was cankerous, and, in consequence, deep melancholy seized her soul, and in the misery of an afflicted heart, she sighed in secret:

"Nought 's had, all 's spent  
Where our desire is got without content:  
'T is safer to be that which we destroy  
Than by destruction dwell in doubtful joy."

In the footsteps of melancholy followed remorse, and vain was her effort to philosophize it away in words, which, though expressive of her own misery, she addressed to her husband, whom she imagined to be afflicted for the same reason as herself:

"How now, my lord, why do you keep alone,  
Of sorriest fancies your companions making;  
Using those thoughts which should indeed have died  
With them they think on? Things without all remedy  
Should be without regard: what 's done is done."

That higher Power to whom innocent blood cries aloud for vengeance, she had neither respected nor considered. Her irreligious mind swayed by evil spirits, those "murdering ministers that wait on nature's mischief," had blighted her natural sensibility to the divine law. But the blow that destroyed the life of Duncan also roused to life her deadened

conscience. Its accusing voice she hears, and at once becomes sensible of a cruel Nemesis that ghost-like shadows her unceasingly, ever whispering her horrid guilt. In the wretchedness common to every human soul that allies itself with evil spirits, she feels no impulse to appeal for divine aid against their malign influence, and bereft of all human hope and sympathy because of her guarded secret, she succumbs to misery and despair, and these deepen with the days as in loneliness she meditates on the emptiness of her golden dreams, and the wretchedness they entail upon her guilt-stained soul. Upon her conscience was at work, day after day, the inevitable law of the Creator, and with the deepening of remorse she realized the force of His words: "Wickedness is fearful, it beareth witness of its condemnation: for a troubled conscience always forecasteth grievous things."<sup>1</sup> "Day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me: I am turned in my anguish whilst the thorn is fastened."<sup>2</sup> As evil spirits harassed King Saul after he had fallen away from God, and drove him first to melancholy, then to remorse and despair, and finally to self-destruction, so the evil spirits to whom Lady Macbeth yielded herself willfully, were far from abandoning her and their diabolical purpose.

At the sight of her remorse, they resort to their usual change of tactics,<sup>3</sup> in order to prevent her return to God by true penitence. Before the murder they minimized the crime and its consequences; but after it they magnify them with the view of inducing despair. Still obsessing her, they harrow her feelings, fill her with sadness, disquiet the imagination, darken the mind with scruples, suggest false reasonings concerning God's mercy, and insist on the uselessness of repentance. Under their diabolical influence, she makes no effort at resistance, and has no recourse to the common means of prayer and penitence; but wholly engrossed in the thought of the punishment of her crime, comes to think it too great to be forgiven, until in the despondency of despair, she walks the night in troubled dreams, giving unconscious expression to the

1. Wisdom 17:10.

2. Ps. 31:4.

3. Rules for Discernment of Spirits, by St. Ignatius Loyola, Rules 2 & 4.

feelings she partly conceals by day: that nothing will cleanse her bloody hands, that nothing will purify her blood-stained soul. "Her accents betray the workings of spirits from the abyss that inexorably demand their victim." Over the whole scene broods that mysterious awe-inspiring tone which prompts us to understand much that is not openly expressed. As we gaze upon her wasted form, "her wan and haggard countenance, her starry eyes glazed with the ever burning fever of remorse, and on their lids the shadow of death," her restless spirit in whispering anguish of gasps and sighs wandering in troubled dreams a living ghost through the darkened rooms and dismal halls of the gloomy castle, her misfortune rouses our human sympathies, and while, as fellow-mortals, we can not help feeling commiseration over the utter ruin of a woman endowed with such great possibilities for good, we also feel an increased horror of crime in presence of its fearful consequences. The affecting scene gives but a glimpse of the turmoil in the depths of her soul, and, as with sighs and groans that move to horror and yet to pity, she vanishes from sight, the sad victim of an unholy ruling passion, we feel that the awful scene naturally suggests to Christian minds the import and value of the divine petition: "lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil" (ll. 17-67).

### THE DIVINE RATHER THAN THE PHYSICIAN

As Lady Macbeth vanishes from the dimly lighted chamber, like a specter of the night, the physician speaks the result of his observations. Her whispered words, which incriminated herself and husband, recall the foul deeds that are whispered about among the people. From fear of the tyrant none, save in bated breath, dares retail these rumors nor comment thereon. While the royal criminals in strange fatuity still imagine their guilty secret to be all their own, it is in fact spread abroad on the wings of the wind. Its divulgation was chiefly due to the nobles who, after having witnessed Macbeth's terror at the sight of Banquo's ghost, and heard his self-incriminating utterances, were so unceremoniously hurried

forth from the banquet-hall by the panic-stricken queen. Some were already in open rebellion against the usurper, and spoke their convictions freely; while others, yet apparently in his service, dare whisper only to confidants their strong suspicions or convictions.

Unnatural crimes, justly concludes the physician, rouse in the criminal an unwonted activity of conscience, which is accompanied with mental disturbance and an abnormal excitement of the imagination that leads him to suspect and fear every man. Criminals with minds thus infected are often known to be exposed by their own rebellious conscience, for in sleep, when the imagination and not the will is in control, they blurt out unwittingly the dread secret. Day and night, they feel the inexorable secret touch of Him who never fails in the sanction of His violated law: "Tribulation and anguish upon every soul that worketh iniquity."<sup>1</sup> "The wicked are like the raging sea which cannot rest."<sup>2</sup>

Convinced that the queen's malady is of the soul, and not of the body, the physician exclaims: "This disease is beyond my practice. More needs she the divine than the physician." His dictum has been repeated since by many a medical adviser. Lady Macbeth needed, indeed, a healer of her sin-tortured soul, a priest of the Church of God, who with divine legatine powers could restore peace to her riotous conscience by sacramental absolution. Such power, Shakespeare, in the character of the physician, a presumably well informed Catholic, seems to recognize in the priesthood of the Church:

"The blackest sin is cleared with absolution."<sup>3</sup>

He knew that the Scribes and Pharisees, the bitter enemies of the Saviour, challenged His divine power of forgiving sins, by protesting: "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" This objection which is sometimes re-uttered in our own day by modern allies of those odious Scribes and Pharisees, the Man-God met by miraculously healing the palsied man before

1. Rom. 2 :9.

2. Is. 57 :20.

3. Rape Luc., verse 51.

the multitude in proof that He, the *Son of Man*, had power on earth to forgive sins; and "the multitude praised and glorified God that gave such power to men."<sup>1</sup> The Savior "came not to call the just but sinners to repentance,"<sup>2</sup> and in their behalf, He conferred the same power upon His apostles and their successors in His universal Church, when, after His resurrection, "breathing on them He said: Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained."<sup>3</sup> Hence, the words of the physician are clear concerning the cure of Lady Macbeth's spiritual malady: her diseased conscience called for a divine physician who, by divinely delegated power, could on condition of true repentance uplift her blood-stained soul, purified from the slough of hopeless remorse.

Moved to pity by Lady Macbeth's sore distress, the kind-hearted physician does not, as the proud pharisee in the temple, thank God that he is not like others, but in Christian charity and humility prays God to "forgive us all." "Who can say: my heart is clean, I am pure from sin?"<sup>4</sup> The thought of our common human frailty is forced upon him by the affecting scene: "He that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall."<sup>5</sup>

Turning to the Lady-in-waiting, he orders her to attend diligently to the queen, and to remove beyond her reach anything by which she might do violence to herself, insinuating that those afflicted with her malady often resort to self-destruction. In conclusion, he confesses amazement and bewilderment; but in charity refrains from voicing his secret thoughts and suspicions: "Judge not and you shall not be judged." Moreover, as court physician, honor bars disclosure of professional knowledge. In fine, with a "good night" from the gentlewoman, the "good doctor" departs burdened with gloomy thoughts and perplexities (ll. 68-76).

1. Matth. 9:2.

2. Luke 5:32.

3. John 20:22.

4. Prov. 20:9.

5. 1 Cor. 10:12.

## SCENE SECOND

### A COUNCIL OF WAR

After the disappearance of Lady Macbeth, Shakespeare proceeds to show how Macbeth, in the hope of escaping retributive justice, attempts to stay by violence the iron hand of fate. This is briefly unfolded in a conference of the nobles who have taken the field against the usurper. On their march with fife and drum, and under colors, they have halted with their clans in the plains near Dunsinane. From this conference we learn of their loyalty to Malcolm, and of their eagerness for the fray that shall purge the land of its malignant plague; and, on the other hand, how Macbeth is broken-spirited and bewildered at the ever increasing desertions from his forces. They hear from Menteith, a new arrival, that the English forces have entered Scotland, and that the crown-prince, Macduff, and the old warrior, Siward, all athirst for revenge, are intent on instant action. Each has a grievous personal cause: one to avenge a father's murder; another, the butchery of his wife and children; and the earl of Northumberland, the murder of his sister's husband. They deem the justice of their cause so impelling that it would even rouse a mortified, or ascetic man who has attained indifference to all concerns of life, and inspire him to respond to the call to arms in a conflict full of carnage and horrors. The Poet, whose familiarity with Sacred Scripture is seen from his numerous allusions to its text, seems, in the present instance, to have borrowed the idea of "mortified" from the words of the Apostle: "If you live according to the flesh, you shall die; but if by the spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live."<sup>1</sup>

By secret information the nobles learn that by agreement the advancing English army is to meet the Scottish forces near Birnam Woods. By the mention of these Woods the Poet opportunely reminds his audience of the equivocal prediction of evil spirits when near its fulfilment:

1. Rom. 8:13.

“Macbeth shall never vanquished be until  
Great Birnam wood to high Dunsinane hill  
Shall come against him.”

At the conference the leaders ascertain from the list which Lennox bears, the names of all the English gentry among the auxiliary troops; and, furthermore, that with the noble young Siward are many gentle youth, still in the budding flower of manhood. Information is next sought concerning the situation and strength of the tyrant's forces. As Macbeth perceives the ever growing power of his enemies, now made most formidable by union with the English troops, he, writes Holinshed, the chronicler, retreats, at their advance, into Fife, where he purposes to await attack in the fortified camp at Dunsinane.

Lord Caithness reports that those ill-disposed call his course of action madness; others of less hostile mind call it valiant fury. Like a man with a distempered, swollen body, he is unable to direct affairs, and to control conflicting elements among his disorganized followers. His secret murders, says Lord Angus, are weighty drags upon his spirits; frequent rebellions reproach his own treason; and subjects yield obedience from fear rather than from love. Now, uncertain of the crown, he is conscious “that his title hangs loose about him,” and feels like a thievish pigmy clad in a giant's garb. It is, therefore, no surprise, says Lord Menteith, that his senses “recoil and start” when conscience and all his faculties protest against his false position. He ever bears about

“A silent court of justice in his breast,  
Himself a judge and jury, and himself  
The prisoner at the bar, ever condemned.” [Tennyson.]

Lord Caithness voices the sentiment of all. It is to march at once to Birnam, and there yield obedience to the crown prince, who comes with a remedy for the diseased realm. Resolved to do their utmost to support Malcolm, the “sovereign flower,” and to destroy the noisome weeds of the land, they begin their march to Birnam.

## SCENE THIRD

### CONFIDENCE ALTERNATING WITH FEAR

Though many thanes with their retainers had one by one joined their fortunes with those of Malcolm, Macbeth still hoped to hold the throne by the sway of terror, and proceeded, sometimes agitated by fear and other times by fury, to ravage the realm with a boundless waste of cruelty. His mad excesses arose from fear as well as from confidence. His guardian spirits of evil had, by their manifestation of their powers at the last interview in the cavern, won his full confidence and inspired him with a firm faith in their assurance of his safety; hence, he felt convinced that he could with absolute impunity defy the hostility of the thanes as well as of all opposing forces.

The present scene, however, shows him under the alternating influence of confidence and fear. Accompanied by the court physician and a few courtiers, he has retired within the castle of Dunsinane; but scout after scout rushes in with the alarming discovery that ten thousand English troops in conjunction with the Scottish forces are advancing against the castle. The report fills his followers with fear and consternation, and Macbeth's own heart quails at the thought of facing so great a force with his small army. His fear soon yields to confidence as he reflects that, safe in his stronghold, his guardian spirits, who "know all mortal consequences," shall battle for him at once invulnerable and unconquerable. The thought renews his courage, and in towering valor he defies the faithless thanes, and drives from his presence other scouts who, pale-faced, hurry forward with confirming reports. Why should he be troubled? His courage can know no taint of fear "till Birnam wood remove to Dunsinane," "and that will never be":

"Who can impress the forest; bid the tree  
Unfix his earth-bound root?"

To animate the flagging spirits of his followers, he vaunts in impassioned tones his utter fearlessness of the advancing

foe. The spirits that know the future have promised him immunity from harm. What matters, then, if the treacherous thanes ally themselves "with the English epicures?" He scorns "the boy, Malcolm," and in fatuity is oblivious of the spirit's warning to "beware Macduff," the one fated instrument of his undoing. One and all are born of woman and, in consequence, his courage shall never know the blight of doubt, nor his heart quake with fear.

In indignation he sneers at the English auxiliaries, dubs them epicures, men more notorious for feastings than renowned for prowess of arms. The idea is borrowed from the chronicles of Holinshed. Englishmen, he affirms, introduced luxuries into Scotland. The sumptuous feasts of Hardicanute, the predecessor of the saintly Edward, had become a common topic of reproach among the Scots. Dr. Johnson, whose dislike for the Scots was well known, believes that Macbeth's reproach of epicurism is nothing more than a natural invective uttered by an inhabitant of a barren country against those who have more opportunity of luxury.

That Macbeth's almost incredible confidence in the equivocal predictions of his evil tempters continues to grow as his danger increases is portrayed in scene after scene with a wondrous refinement of irony. His fallacious confidence illustrates a sinner's folly, when ensnared by the wiles of Satan. It is explained by the fact that, his soul afire with the passion of ambition, his will with its hopes and desires mastered his whole being, and turned his mind away from the consideration of moral truths in opposition to his cherished aspiration.

At his first meeting with the Weird Sisters, Macbeth was in presence of serious temptation, and it grew in gravity in proportion as his royal ambition became day by day more intensified under the influence of his demon-tempters. While it is true that man by his own unaided strength can be faithful to easier moral duties, and overcome lighter temptations, it is equally true that he is morally unable to overcome vehement temptation without the aid of grace. As a consequence of his fallen state, his animal-nature is in rebellion

against the higher, and his senses and appetites, or passions, are inclined to present sensible things, which move him readily and strongly, while his intellect, left to itself, is remiss in considering moral principles which may strengthen the instability of his will, and enable it to overcome temptation.

Macbeth, therefore, under grave and persistent temptation, needed grace of resistance; and prayer is specially characterized as the means of obtaining it. But he was not, as already noted, a practical Christian of religious life and habits, and, therefore, from his neglect of prayer as the means of grace, he fell a victim to the wiles of his evil tempters.<sup>1</sup> Hence, after he had rejected God and his eternal interests for the sake of the crown, he was so completely in the power of his fiendish guides that they swayed his will, and held it firm in adherence to the truth of their promises; and this pleasing subjective certitude barred his mind from doubt or from examining whether his confidence was supported by real, or objective evidence.

Many men go through life adhering to errors in judgment, whether theoretical or practical; and their errors are always traceable to free will. They are not, of course, caused by the objective truth; nor can the intellect be necessitated to judge falsely, since its very essence consists in the power of knowing—of grasping truth. There remains but one possible cause of error—man's freedom to embrace or reject a proposition. While the will then is the ultimate cause of all error, there are various proximate causes: such as false information, confusion of ideas, impatience to reach a conclusion, great conceit or pride which hinders us from doubting our own judgments, and, in fine, prejudice and passion, or strong desire, which prompts us to accept as true what is pleasing to us. Under such conditions, man by his free will can often bend the intellect to fix its attention on the probabilities of what he wishes to be true, and to turn the mind from weighing all reasons to the contrary, and thus he can form a false judg-

1. Cf. *The Christian Religion*, Rev. W. Wilmes, S. J., p. 287. *De Gratia Christi*, Card. Mazzella, p. 242.

ment to which he adheres without fear of error.<sup>1</sup> In like manner Macbeth, who ardently desired that the promises of his evil tempters be true, failed to reflect upon the important truth that fallen spirits can possess no certain knowledge of future events which depend entirely upon man's free will; that they are only shrewd guessers by reason of their superior intellect and long experience; and that hating truth and loving falsehood, their purpose in dealing with man is to deceive him by specious or seeming truths. At his cost, therefore, Macbeth was to learn that their fictitious or equivocal prophecies uttered, as the oracles of old,<sup>2</sup> with the intent of deceiving, would indeed be verified, because they themselves were to bring about the fulfilment as they, and not as Macbeth understood them.

### A RUDE SHOCK

As Macbeth's boasted courage is based on a belief of assured safety, which is wholly subjective, it receives a rude shock when he is suddenly recalled to the objective reality of things. His confidence, resting on superstition, buoys him up against dangers as long as he dwells in the subjective world of thought, but fails him as every fresh alarm awakens him to the actual situation. Hence, when he observes the servant, pallid from fear and trembling, rushing forward with the alarming news of the great advancing army, his spirit of bravado lapses into rage and fury. In the utter loss of self-control, he curses in great passion the unfortunate messenger, who but performs his duty, and heaping upon him such derisive epithets as villain, patch, goose, and lily-livered boy, drives him forth, lest he infect others by his manifest terror (ll. 1-9).<sup>3</sup>

1. Cf. Coppens' *Logic & Metaphysics*, p. 52 et seq.

2. An illustration is the well known equivocal prophecy: "Te vincere Romanos." (Yon the Romans shall conquer.)

3. Loon signifies a stupid man, a rogue, or rascal: patch, as a nickname of fools, was suggested by the motley colored garments of the jester; goose was the emblem of cowardice, and as such occurs in another tragedy:

"You souls of geese

That bear the shapes of men, how have you run

From slaves that apes would beat!" (Cor. I, iv.)

Lily-livered is a term synonymous with cowardice, and is so used by the Poet in his character of Falstaff: "The second property of your excellent sherris is the warming of the blood; which, before cold and settled, left the liver white and pale, which is the badge of pusillanimity and cowardice," (2 Henry, IV, iv, 3.)

Macbeth's external violence reflects his internal disturbance. Tortured in conscience by the guilt of many crimes, and distracted in mind by pressing dangers, he feels immersed in melancholy. His wild disorders, inconsistencies, and mad assurance, alternating with dejection and "valiant fury," indicate a presumption without hope and a confidence without moral courage. From the depths of desolation he perceives in the promises of the apparitions the sole ray of hope amid the thickening gloom. Though evil spirits still sway his will to confidence in their words, he, nevertheless, at the sight of appalling odds against him, is unable to repress sentiments of fear and uncertainty, and, in consequent dejection of mind and heart, he feels an overpowering melancholy and weariness of life. Gone is his bravado, as turning for consolation to his trusted confidant, he confesses his fears, anxieties, and doubts concerning the issue of the conflict. Victory shall accord him the crown with joyful security, or defeat shall dethrone him and hand him over, a victim to avenging justice. The painful uncertainty with all that it means for good or for evil, afflicts his mind, overpowers his spirits, and fills him with so great a desolation of soul and heaviness of heart that, in self-communing and despondent words he affirms his weary life to be no longer worth the living.

A similar feeling of desolation had overmastered him after the coronation. The crown had brought him keen disappointments and fears, which racking his soul, engendered "terrible dreams" that "shook him nightly," and caused him to lie in torture of mind in "restless ecstasy," or violent mental agitation. Then he envied the peaceful sleep of Duncan, whom neither the "domestic malice" of the thanes, nor "foreign levies" could further trouble. His "terrible dreams, torture of mind, and restless agony," Macbeth, as a man of war, had resolved to end by the sword. He firmly believed in his ability to crush all opposition; but his course of violence and blood had produced a contrary and unforeseen effect; had brought him face to face with the present crisis, in which a formidable force is about to besiege him in his last retreat within the fortified castle of Dunsinane.

In the pressing crisis his former "torture of mind" and "restless agony" not only remain, but even reach a greater intensity. With a ceaseless torturing remorse gnawing at his conscience by day and by sleepless nights, fears and anxieties continue to increase and perplex his mind. The crown is now in actual jeopardy; the thanes whom he had failed to down, have united against him, and, strengthened by a foreign army, are advancing on every side; with a few followers he must meet them in a bloody and doubtful conflict, whose fatal issue means the loss of the throne as well as his life. Thus agitated by fears, beset by insuperable difficulties, and perplexed by uncertainties, his soul overcharged with crime, and his mind and feelings overburdened with sadness and desolation, he bitterly complains that Fate by cruel touch has changed his glorious summer into a winter of discontent, wherein his course of life with all its bright dreams have been nipped by a killing frost and blasted. His sorry plight is that described by a later poet:

"My days are in the yellow leaf;  
The flowers and fruit of life are gone,  
The worm, the canker, and the grief  
Are mine alone." [Byron.]<sup>1</sup>

### COMPLAINTS STRANGELY PITEOUS

The complaints of Macbeth appear strangely piteous. Though he had betrayed his crime to the thanes at the banquet scene, he perseveres in the fatuous belief that Duncan's murder is still a secret all his own, and, in consequence, failing to trace effects to their causes, deems himself harshly treated, and in fact feels surprised and indignant at the treason of the thanes. Were his mental vision not blinded by his tempters, he would see that the loss of "honor, love, obedience, and troops of friends" is but the common and natural consequence of his crimes and usurpation; and that he can expect nought from his constrained followers save

1. On completing his thirty-sixth year.

muttered curses and empty "mouth-honor." The latter phrase is likely another of Shakespeare's many allusions to Sacred Scripture: "This people draw near me with their mouth, but their heart is far from me."<sup>1</sup>

The pangs of remorse are not, however, Macbeth's chief affliction at the present moment. His voice of conscience is muffled, on the one hand, by the stress of direful dangers, which, barring all other cares, impel him to superhuman activity, and on the other by his trusted evil tempters who, by distracting him from thoughts of his terrible guilt, drive him on in his bloody course of oppression. From the depths of his present momentary desolation he shall soon again, when mindful of his promised safety, uplift his dejected spirits and in boasting valor defy the massing hordes of treasonous thanes and "English epicures."

Some interpreters of Shakespeare see in his depression a reference to Elizabeth. The opinion seems supported by some probability. The Poet was writing for an audience which was well acquainted with the dark incidents that troubled the last days of the recently deceased queen, and he himself as well as the new sovereign, as is shown elsewhere, had small regard for her. The sentiments, moreover, which the lines ascribe to Macbeth are in perfect accord with those that historians attribute to Elizabeth. She had learned the unwelcome and distressing truth that she had lived too long; that she had become an object of aversion to her subjects; that those on whose loyalty she had hitherto reposed in confidence were unfaithful to her; and that even her favorites were impatiently looking forward to her death. Pensive and taciturn, she sat whole days by herself, indulging in the most gloomy reflections, and every rumor agitated her with new and imaginary terrors. In the melancholy of her mental sufferings she assured the French ambassador that she had grown weary of her very life.<sup>2</sup> It is, therefore nothing strange that her sense of abandonment and depression of mind and heart should loom up before Shakespeare's mind when

1. Is. 29:13.

2. Cf. Lingard's History of England, Vol. VI, p. 644. (Edinburgh Edition.)

wishing to portray Macbeth's gloomy melancholy, world-weariness, and tiredness of life.

In extreme nervous tension Macbeth loudly calls for Seyton, and in the hope of better news seeks further information. When he learns that the English army of ten thousand has united with the Scottish forces near the high wooded hill of Dunsinane, twelve miles distant, and is preparing to attack him on the morrow, his old-time courage is aroused, and, in the spirit of a warrior that has never known defeat, he proclaims his readiness to fight to the last. Alert for instant action, he demands his armor, and orders out more troopers who, riding at great speed through the country on every side, shall gather reinforcements and suppress all talk of fear by repressive measures. At the presence of the court physician, he turns his thoughts to the condition of Lady Macbeth, and hears that her disorder is more of the soul than of the body; that her restless, sleepless nights arise from an imagination overwrought with disturbing phantasms.

Lady Macbeth, taking no part in the horrors that enraged the realm against her husband, clings to him faithfully and after many of his personal friends had deserted him, she with mind diseased and heart overpowered with horrifying memories, which defy all antidotes, follows him unhesitatingly to the doomed castle of Dunsinane. That she still retained her husband's affection is clear from the present instance, when, though sorely distracted and preoccupied with the impending crisis, he is greatly concerned for her health, and gives in anxious solicitude a mournful recital of her sufferings. While thinking of her serious plight, he recognizes it as his own, and again in self-absorption lapses into a melancholy reflective mood. His plaintive words, which describe with pathos "the rooted sorrow and troubles of the brain," disclose his deep despondency, sickness of heart, and weariness of life. The culprit that has murdered sleep is still afflicted by "the terrible dreams that shake him nightly," and in a state bordering on delirium, which is induced by reason of insomnia, he yearns pathetically for some antidote that can expel bloody memories which haunt the mind and oppress the heart.

The plaintive tones of Macbeth's words, as well as his keen disappointment and anger at the physician's inability to prescribe the desired antidote, again show that he has all along been making mentally the application to himself. Scorning in rage the medical art in its impotency to heal such mental maladies, he calls for his armor, and in great excitement and agitation turns his thoughts to the alarming situation. Especially fretful and disturbed at the presence of the English auxiliaries, he speaks in misgiving words his anxiety, fear, and apprehension. Dreading each danger that he thinks he scorns, his courage fluctuates between fear and "valiant fury," now ebbing at the thought of his desperate fortunes, now flowing as the promise of the spirits occur to his mind. His credulous belief in their assurance is the one strong anchor with which, securely moored, he hopes to ride in safety the impending destructive storm. Hence, he closes the agitated scene as he began it with the boastful words: "Macbeth shall never vanquished be, until great Birnam wood shall come against him" (ll. 19-62).

## SCENE FOURTH

### THE STAGE IN SHAKESPEARE'S DAY

The theaters of London in Shakespeare's day were rude in structure, and still marked by many of the earlier conditions under which plays had been presented. They retained with some modifications the same arrangements as the courtyard of the old English inn, with its open space surrounded on three sides by galleries. The scenery was extremely scanty and of the simplest description: when tragedy was in action the stage was ornamented with black tapestry; a projection from the middle of the stage served for a rampart, or tower, or balcony; a raised board bore the name of the region or city at which the spectator was to imagine himself; and his fancy was supposed to picture a scene of rocks, or woods, or sea, or ships, in accordance with the large printed placard on the stage. A literary contemporary wrote in ridicule:

"You shall have Asia on the one side and Africa on the other, and so many other under-kingdoms, that the player when he comes in, must ever begin with telling where he is, or else the tale will not be conceived. Now shall you have three ladies walk to gather flowers, and then we must believe the stage to be a garden. By and by we hear of shipwreck in the same place, then we are to blame if we accept it not for a rock. In the meantime two armies fly in, represented with four swords and bucklers, and then what hard heart will not receive it for a pitched field."<sup>1</sup>

This absence of visible scenery imposed on the dramatist the task, not only of creating the plot and action, but the background of his play; and much of the most exquisite poetry in our language was written to set before the imagination that which the theater could not set before the eye.<sup>2</sup> Adapting himself to conditions, the Poet introduces, accordingly, several typical scenes, like the present, to represent war on the stage. Malcolm's army is seen near Birnam wood and, to the beat of drums, soldiers with colors flying march in review before him, and Siward, and the Scottish chieftains. The crown prince in high hopes of victory expresses confidence that the thanes shall soon be rid of those servants who in the fee of the usurper live as spies in their homes. His order that each soldier "hew down a bough and bear it before him" is borrowed from Holinshed's Chronicles: "Malcolm commanded every man to get a bough of some tree or other of that wood in his hand as big as he might bear, and to march therewith in such wise that on the next morrow they might come closely and unseen in this manner within view of the enemy."

### BIRNAM WOOD

Though the incident of the moving forest verifies the equivocal promise made to Macbeth by the evil spirits, its association with the prophecy of the Weird Sisters is not historic, but purely Shakespeare's own creation. Apart from

1. Sir Philip Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry*.

2. Cf. Mable, *Shakespeare, Poet, Dramatist, and Man*, p. 77. Cf. etiam Gervinus, *Shakespeare Commentaries*, p. 84.

this prophetic association, the story of the moving forest is found in varying forms among the myths of many lands. Already a legend of Arabia in the time of Mohammed, it is traced back to India, and even to the days of Alexander the Great. The mythical basis of the Macbeth legend, it is asserted, is the ancient German religious custom of May-festivals, or Summer-welcomings. King Grünewald was originally a Winter-giant, whose dominion ceased when the May-feast begins and the green wood draws nigh.<sup>1</sup> The folk-lore tale is in brief as follows: "A king had an only daughter who possessed wonderful (preternatural) gifts. When his enemy, a king named Grünewald, besieged him in his castle, the daughter during the long siege continually encouraged her father to resistance. But on May-day when she saw the hostile army approach with green boughs, she in fear and anguish knew that all was lost, and said to her father: 'Father, you must yield or die; I see the green wood drawing nigh.'"<sup>2</sup> This tale is clearly analogous to the Macbeth legend. The daughter knows that her father can not be conquered till the green wood moves against him and as, like Macbeth, she deems this impossible, she urges him to confidence. When, however, she sees in surprise and affright the seemingly impossible actually come to pass, she counsels him prudently to make terms with King Grünewald. The Scottish legend of the moving forest was not committed to writing before 1420. In adapting the later version of Holinshed's, Shakespeare gives it further poetical embellishment by associating it with evil spirits, who, intent upon deceiving Macbeth, make it the basis of their equivocation.

In face of many adverse reports, Macbeth still credulously maintains his confidence in the promise of his guardian spirits, and because of the numbers of the enemy, decides to gain strategic advantage by retiring within the strongly fortified castle of Dunsinane. Malcolm commends his prudence: were he to take the open field he would give the gentry and commoners that are in constrained service the desired opportunity

1. Manual of German Mythology, p. 557.

2. Simrock apud Furness, p. 398. Grimm's German Popular Tales, I. 148.

to desert him. Macduff speaks against idle speculation concerning desertions and, while cautioning against negligence prompted by overconfident feelings of security, pleads for industrious and valorous action. The old warrior, Siward, in turn declares in oracular words that a battle alone can settle matters, and expose what are each man's rights and what his duties. The scene, in fine, closes with the conference, as Siward gives the command of forward march to the troops.

## SCENE FIFTH

### IN REFLECTIVE MOOD

The scene is placed within Macbeth's camp on the hill of Dunsinane. Soldiers marching to the beat of drum are seen passing in martial array before the castle in presence of Macbeth. They are but the remnant of the large force that once was his. Seyton, his faithful adherent, appears the only man of note among his followers; of the nobles mentioned in the play, all have joined the army now advancing against the usurper. As scout after scout brings in alarming news, the cry, "They come," is passed along the walls and shouted from the watch-towers. The noisy commotion on all sides awakens Macbeth to action, and again in his element, his martial spirit is aroused. At his command the bugle blast hurries all to arms, and the banners are unfurled on the outer walls. To animate his soldiers with his own spirit of defiance, he reminds them of their impregnable position, and of his purpose of holding the fortress against the enemy. "The castle's strength will laugh a siege to scorn": hence, let the besiegers persevere in their futile attack "till famine and the ague eat them up." Were they not reenforced by numerous deserters from his own ranks, he might with a more equal force meet them dareful face to face in the open field, and beat them backward home. His speech is suddenly interrupted by shrieks of women within the castle, at which Seyton hurries forth to ascertain the cause.

Left alone to his own thoughts for a few moments,

Macbeth, the man of action, falls again into a reflective mood, and is swayed by imagination. The first sentiment is one of surprise that shrieks of women should now affect him so little. His present callous state forces upon him the thought of other days of innocence of life, when his mind unaccustomed to bloody thoughts, his heart unhardened by crime, and his conscience unseared by guilt, his feelings still unblunted quailed at a shriek in the night, and his hair stood on end at the mere recital of a tragic tale.

After the first murder his imagination had been excited to alarming fears and terrors. "The owl's scream and the cricket's cry" had affrighted him, and every noise had appalled him. His hands were "a sorry sight," and he was even "afraid to think of what he had done." These apprehensions, fears, and terrors, he himself attributes later to his imagination, which was as yet unfamiliar with crime.<sup>1</sup> The change is strongly marked after his visit to the Weird Sisters in the cavern. From that time, devoted to action and wholly absorbed in strengthening his position against the increasing power of the enemy, he yielded less to play of the imagination, and was less affected by fantastic fears and apprehensions. He has "supped full with horrors": Banquo's ghost had twice at the supper table overpowered him with dismay and terror; evil spirits in the cavern had conjured up before his eyes dreadful bloody apparitions; and having since familiarized himself with deeds of blood and smothered the rebellious voice of conscience, no "direness" or horror can longer startle him to fear and apprehension. He reflects the sad condition of the not uncommon hardened sinner who with conscience dead no longer distinguishes between good and evil, and pursues his wicked course undisturbed to the end (ll. 1-15).

#### LADY MACBETH'S DEMISE

As soon as Seyton returns, Macbeth with suspicion in his words anxiously inquires, wherefore were those shrieks of women. In reply, he learns that the loud cries were lamen-

1. III, iv, 142.

tations over the sudden death of his unhappy wife. While the Poet leaves to our conjecture the cause of Lady Macbeth's demise, nevertheless, from the physician's order to remove all means of self-destruction and to watch her closely, he seems to insinuate that she died by her own hand. Such, at least, was the common rumor, as reported by Malcolm at the close of the drama: "Who as it is thought by self and violent hands took off her life." Her mind diseased from a continually disturbed and overwrought imagination, and her nervous system wrecked from insomnia, there is little doubt that the great commotion excited by the alarming beat of drums, the bugle-blasts to arms, and the cry of "still they come," resounding on every side, led her, in fear and despair of her own and her husband's cause, to seek by self-murder an escape from the horrors of impending perils. Awe-inspiring and fearful is the thought of her sinking to death in a mental agony of an overpowering despairing remorse, the unfortunate victim of her ruling passion.

Every Christian knows at least in theory that retribution follows in the footsteps of sin; yet forgetful of this truth or indifferent to it, the sinner yields to temptation in the fatuous belief that he shall escape, where others have paid the penalty:

"All this the world well knows, yet none knows well,  
To shun the heaven that leads men to this hell."

Had Lady Macbeth not persuaded herself and husband that they could attain the throne and, nevertheless, escape detection and punishment, she surely would not have impelled him to crime. Impressive, indeed, is the lesson which Shakespeare here sketches of the fruits of a bad ambition reaped by unhallowed means. If Lady Macbeth in like aspirations with her husband, had not been enslaved by ambition; if with her great intellectual powers and capacity of love, she had rendered the same fealty to his better nature instead of allying herself with his evil tempters, how different would have been the results for good! In her broken spirit, her saddened days, her awful nights, and premature despairing death, the Poet, by disclosing the appalling effects of sin, strikingly

emphasizes the worth and blissfulness of moral rectitude and innocence of life.

"It is one of the finest thoughts of the whole drama that Lady Macbeth should die before her husband; for not only does this exhibit him in a new light, equally interesting morally and psychologically; but it prepares a gradual softening of the catastrophe. Macbeth left alone, resumes much of that connection with humanity which he had so long abandoned; his thoughtfulness becomes pathetic and his sickness of heart awakens sympathy."<sup>1</sup> That he still retained affection for his wife, notwithstanding the fact that she, in alliance with evil spirits, had in the challenge of his love driven him against his judgment into the gulf of destruction, may be gathered from the utter absence of harsh feelings and words of reproach and recrimination. Furthermore, his mournful recital of her mental sufferings, his solicitude for her health, which urges him to anxious inquiries even while distracted by most pressing affairs; his repeated insistence that the physician do his utmost to restore her to "sound and pristine health"; and lastly his terrible anger at the physician's avowal of his helplessness in the case; are all indications of a deep and undiminished affection.

To the contrary, however, is the opinion of certain commentators. One compares the deep natural pathos of Macduff on hearing of his wife's death to that of Macbeth in the present scene. The former, he says, "Pulls his hat upon his brows," and gives vent to his agony in the simplest and most direct words; the latter makes a speech elaborate and poetic, but without a touch of the heart.<sup>2</sup> The comparison may, indeed seem plausible, but a little reflection will show its ineptness, because of the difference of both in character, in subjective conditions, and in circumstances. In the drama, Macbeth appears as a man far from effusive and not given to sentimental expression of his inward feelings of affection; but rather a brusque warrior who deems such manifestations unbecoming his sturdy manhood. In the present instance,

1. The Variorum Shakespeare, in loco.

2. W. W. Story, Excursions in Art and Literature, p. 225.

he is laboring under the most harassing circumstances: England and all Scotland, represented by her nobles, are gathering in overwhelming force before his castle, where with reduced and doubtful followers he must make a last stand for his life, and where in the midst of alarming clamors, he is actually attempting to rally his panic-stricken soldiers for the impending struggle. Amid these harrowing circumstances his mental faculties, moreover, seem in an abnormal condition; "the affliction of terrible dreams that shake him nightly," the ceaseless pangs of a fruitless remorse, as well as anxieties, fears, and perplexities have left him haggard of body, worn of brain, and in a confusion of mind bordering on delirium: a state in which he feels an overmastering sense of despondency and world-weariness. Considering all this, it is but natural that his first sentiments should be regret and vexation at the ill-timed death of the queen—ill-timed, coming at the very crisis of his life, when his cup of bitterness is already full to overflowing. For the attainment of a common ambition a strong mutual affection had made them partners in crime. For her he had sacrificed all here and hereafter, and now that she was gone, why should he linger on in blighted life? Never before had death touched him so closely, and caused him so to realize the brief and uncertain tenure of existence. Already stupefied by pressure of remorse, calamity, and despair, his mind is overwhelmed by the blow and his thoughts rushing into the blank and dismal future are couched in images indicative of the certainty and inevitableness of death and the nothingness of human life.

### PROCRASTINATION OF MORTAL FOOLS

From man's impotency to stay the silent, stealthy steps of death, he is aware of the futility of his wish, and proceeds to generalize on the fatal procrastination of "mortal fools," whom "all our yesterdays have lighted the way to dusty death."

" 'To-morrow I will live,' the fool does say;

To-day itself 's too late; — the wise lived yesterday." [Martial.]

“This day was yesterday to-morrow named;  
To-morrow shall be yesterday proclaimed.” [Owen.]

The alliteration of the passage as well as the idea of death taking procrastinating fools by surprise may have been suggested to Shakespeare by the well-known lines of his day:

“They follow the crow’s cry to their great sorrow,  
*Cras, cras, cras*<sup>1</sup> we shall amend,  
And if we mend not then, then shall we the next morrow,  
Or else shortly after, we shall no more offend;  
Amend mad fool, when God his grace doth send.”<sup>2</sup>

In the thought that each yesterday was once a tomorrow, and as such “lighted fools the way to death,” the Poet very probably had in mind the *ignis fatuus*,<sup>3</sup> a phenomenon not infrequent in the lowlands of Macbeth’s country, and commonly known as the light of fools or fools’ light.<sup>4</sup> There are many instances on record of travelers mistaking the *ignis fatuus* for a lamp, and being thus lured into bogs or marshy places where they perished. “Dusty death,” or the idea of death bringing man down to the dust of the grave, is another instance of the Poet’s many references to Sacred Scripture: “Dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return.”<sup>5</sup> “Thou has brought me down to the dust of death.”<sup>6</sup> “At death man goes into the house of his eternity, his dust returns to the earth whence it came and his spirit to God who gave it.”<sup>7</sup>

Macbeth next gives expression to his own subjective feelings in words that disclose his oppression of mind which arises from despondency, desperation, weariness of a ruined life, and a torturing, remorseful sense of guilt with its inevitable retribution. “Out, out, brief candle!” Out, brief flame of life—a flame which consumes itself in burning. The sands of man’s span of life begin to run at his birth. To Macbeth’s

1. To-morrow, to-morrow, to-morrow.

2. Halliwell apud The Variorum Shakespeare.

3. Allen apud Variorum Shakespeare.

4. “An *ignis fatuus* that bewitches  
And leads men into pools and ditches.” (Butler.)

5. Gen. 3:19.

6. Ps. 21:16.

7. Ecc. 12:7.

disordered mind all things of earth have now lost their fascination, and seem as unsubstantial as "walking shadows." Man in his brief life, like a bedizened king, struts and frets in passing show his hour upon the stage, and then is seen no more; his life's story, full of sound and fury, is nothing more than the incoherent tale of an idiot, signifying nothing. The metaphor,

"All the world's a stage  
And all the men and women merely players,"

had a special charm for the Poet, and his frequent allusion to it shows how he, himself an actor, was deeply impressed with the idea. To him, actors were but shadows, shadows of realities; for in the histrionic or mimetic art, actors are not themselves, but the living, walking shadows of real personages, whose form they assume in an attempt to reflect their thoughts and sentiments.

### WEARY OF LIFE

His words of despondency and desperation are suddenly interrupted by the hurried entrance of a scout in manifest fear and breathless excitement. Macbeth in anger demands in imperious tones that he tell "his story quickly." When the messenger in great timidity mentions what he saw—Birnam wood moving forward—Macbeth is at first startled and surprised, but deeming the report incredible, and the fact even impossible, he yields to anger and in the loss of self-control, berates and threatens the scout in great wrath and fury. In truth, the allied forces under Malcolm had begun their march some hours before from Birnam wood, but were not observed until they had come within three miles of the castle. The messenger persisting in the truth of his report, Macbeth in rage threatens to hang him if it prove false, until he shall shrivel up in famine; but, in weakening anger, he adds that, if the report be true, he cares not if the same be done to himself. Doubt already begins to torture his mind. In the promise:

“Macbeth shall never vanquished be until  
Great Birnam wood to high Dunsinane hill  
Shall come against him,”

he suspects with horror, for the first time, his probable deception by equivocating fiends that utter falsehoods in the guise of specious truths. His deception can be laid solely to his own folly. Every Christian knows that the words of fiends may not be trusted; that the “father of lies” and his legions intermeddle in human affairs with the sole purpose of enticing man from virtue and from God; that accurate knowledge of future events which depend upon the free will of man can not be known in advance with certainty, save by the omniscient God; and therefore, that predictions of evil spirits are based on falsehood, or equivocation, or at best on shrewd guesswork. Their equivocation in the present instance is evident. Macbeth understood their promise, as they wished, in his own favor when he said:

“That will never be:  
Who can impress the forest; bid the tree  
Unfix his earth-bound root?”

They were intent, however, on fulfilling it in their own meaning; for they felt confident of their power to inspire Malcolm to adopt the strategem of the moving forest. Birnam wood was on an elevation of 1568 feet, and afforded a clear view of Dunsinane, twelve miles distant. A commander, desirous of laying siege to the fortified castle on the hill across the valley, would, in accordance with military tactics, endeavor to screen from the enemy the number of his advancing troops. The strategem had been employed at other times, but only to conceal the attacking force, when it was inferior to that of the enemy; but as Malcolm’s army was overwhelmingly superior to Macbeth’s, the strategem serves no other purpose than that of the fiends.

As Macbeth’s doubt increases concerning the promises of the equivocating evil tempters, he begins “to pull in resolution” in fear and dismay. Like a fleet courser that unchecked

rushes on to its destruction, he, in the confidence of assured safety, had in the face of multiplying dangers, given full rein to his courage, until now, surprised and dazed on the very brink of a precipice, he sinks in "resolution," and even quails at the fearful thought that he has been tricked by the fiends. In his feeling of assured safety, whose sole base was his fatuous and undoubted faith in the promise of his evil guardians, he had withdrawn with his faithful followers within the castle of Dunsinane, and fortified it against ever multiplying enemies; but he realizes too late that, duped by "the fiends that lie like truth," he has placed himself in a hopeless situation, has cooped himself up in a cage, from which he can not escape in presence of overwhelming besieging forces. Compared to his present distemper of mind, slight was formerly the mental disorder in which he resolved "to let the frame of things disjoint and both worlds suffer ere" he would "sleep in the affliction of those terrible dreams that shook him nightly." Far worse is his present delirious state: tortured by the pangs of guilt and fear of retribution, bewildered and enraged at the trickery of fiendish advisors, and despairing of escape from his hopeless plight, he actually confesses in maddened frenzy his weariness of life, and wishes "the crack of doom" were at hand. In dreadful desperation, he determines, in a reckless and infuriated martial spirit, to meet his probably impending fate in battling to the death, like a warrior "with harness on his back" (ll. 15-52).

## SCENE SIXTH

### IN MARTIAL ARRAY

In the present brief scene, the castle of Macbeth appears in the background, and Malcolm and Siward with their allied forces, are seen marching in martial array before it. Malcolm commanding a halt gives a general order that the soldiers throw down the leafy bows which they carry to screen their numbers, and so strike Macbeth with terror at the sight of the formidable army which hems him in, a prisoner within

his castle. The strategem from a military point of view was ineffective; since before their arrival, the usurper was already well informed by spies of the vast superiority of Malcolm's forces. The ruse, however, was no doubt inspired by Macbeth's evil tempters, and it served their purpose, which was to destroy his feeling of assured safety by exposing the real meaning of their equivocation and his own consequent self-destruction.

"When Malcolm's whole power was come together," writes Holinshed, the chronicler, "Malcolm divided the same into three battalions;" of the front division, he entrusted the command to Siward and his son, while he and Macduff would lead the two others. All is in readiness for battle, and Macduff commands the trumpeters to blare forth the strident notes of instant bloody conflict. The scene closes with loud alarms heard amid resounding clang and clash of arms.

## SCENE SEVENTH

### AT BAY

The seventh scene discloses "another part of the field of battle." Amid noises on every side as of skirmishes and conflict, Macbeth with bloody sword in hand enters suddenly in breathless excitement. In desperation he recognizes the hopelessness of his cause. Though betrayed by evil spirits, deserted by his followers, and ensnared in a trap whence he can not escape, he continues like a wild animal at bay, to fight on fiercely against the dogs of war. In his desperate perils, he likens himself to the baited bear which, tied to a stake, is compelled to defend his life against bloodthirsty hounds that are set upon him in courses. Having sacrificed eternal for temporal interests, he clings to life more tenaciously, the nearer he approaches the dreadful retribution awaiting him; and in utter despondency and despair seeks to bolster up his drooping spirits by the thought that, though he lose the battle, he shall not suffer harm in person. Have

not "the spirits that know all mortal consequences pronounced" his safety? "Fear not, Macbeth!"

"Be bloody, bold, and resolute; laugh to scorn  
The power of man; for none of woman born  
Shall harm Macbeth."

Macbeth's continued confidence in this prediction has seemed surpassing strange to many. Experience, they think, should have taught him to regard it with suspicion and mistrust. That he did not do so, after his deception by these "fiends that lie like truth," they attribute to an oversight of the Poet. Others, however, rejecting such an interpretation, ascribe the confidence displayed to Shakespeare's perfect knowledge of human nature. He knew full well, writes Knight, "that one hope destroyed does not necessarily banish all hope; that the gambler who has lost thousands still believes that his last guinea will redeem them; and that the last of a long series of perishing delusions is as firmly trusted as if the great teacher, Time, had taught nothing."

If Macbeth had been in an undisturbed state of mind, possessing full command of his reasoning faculties, and capable of reflecting and eliciting a calm and unbiased judgment, he would undoubtedly have perceived the folly of further confidence in lying spirits that had already twice deceived him, and led him into dreadful straits, from which he can not possibly escape, save at the sacrifice of his life. That in the present crisis, his was not such a state of calm deliberation, was owing to the abnormal condition of his mind, to the desperate circumstances which threatened his overwhelming ruin, and to the potent influence which his evil tempters still exercised upon him. The drama shows that, tortured in soul by the sense of guilt and the dread of retribution, his imagination is feverishly excited and overwrought by fearful dreams; that his mind, harassed by fears, anxieties, and the consciousness of imminent peril, is, furthermore, so enervated by sleepless nights that, afflicted with alternating fits of defiant fury and hopeless despondency, he seems to

live in a delirium, which some call madness, and "others that lesser hate him, valiant fury." With mind and imagination thus disordered and clouded, he is, moreover, obsessed by evil spirits. Having given himself over to them body and soul, he can not rid himself of them, nor indeed, under their enchantment, does he desire to do so. Relentlessly they pursue him, intent upon the ruin of his soul. By sophistries they again sway his disordered mind and regain his confidence. They had spoken truth: Birnam wood has come to Dunsinane, and he faces defeat; but he had misconstrued their prediction, and his deception was his own. Under their malign influence, he now becomes blind to the equivocation of their other promise: no man of woman born shall harm Macbeth, and, deeming it too clear to allow of misunderstanding, he accepts it with the greatest confidence. It is his only ray of hope amid the thickening gloom which surrounds him; his only escape from the precipice of destruction; and in the black seething whirlpool of despair in which he feels himself immersed and struggling, bewildered by fear and terror, he clutches with avidity at anything, as a drowning man at a straw.

### A BRAVE ASPIRANT

Macbeth's brief soliloquy is interrupted by young Siward, who, rushing forward sword in hand and gazing intently about him, suddenly halts in presence of a strange and unknown chieftain. Never before had he seen Macbeth, and in suspicion, regardless of all ceremony, he challenges his identity. Like many a young warrior, athirst for renown, Siward had amid the battle been searching eagerly for the tyrant, with the intent of winning military fame by slaying him with his own sword in personal combat. In the spirited dialogue that follows, Macbeth alludes to his own well-known valor and prowess of arms which have always stricken terror into adversaries. Siward in turn can not express in words his supreme abhorrence of the criminal usurper, and challenges his boast by the lie direct, and, as a consequence, their swords clash in instant and deadly combat. The young

warrior, however, in a fight fierce but brief, falls a victim to the superior strength and skill of the hated tyrant. Pointing at the lifeless form with his bloody sword, Macbeth exclaims in mingled sentiments of pity and contempt, "Thou wast born of woman!" While sheathing his blade he professes to defy, and even to scorn all weapons wielded by man of woman born. The immediate effect of his victory is to inspire greater confidence in the promise of his evil tempters.

Hastily pushing forward to the part of the field of battle whence resounded the greatest clamor, Macduff hurriedly enters upon the scene in eager search and excitement. His anxiety to meet the tyrant face to face grows in intensity, as the thought is forced upon him that, should the murderer of his wife and children be slain by other hand than his, their ghosts would forever haunt him. Spurning to combat with wretched hirelings of the usurper, he reserves his sword for Macbeth alone with the resolve either to hew the bloody criminal with his vengeful blade, or to sheathe it again with unbattered edge. As alarms and noise of battle grow louder and nearer, he concludes from clatter of feet and clash of arms that a chieftain "of greatest note" is nigh, and rushes forward in the high hope of facing the accursed usurper.

Close upon Macduff's exit, Malcolm and Siward enter. From the latter we learn, during the pause in battle, that the thanes with their clans are fighting bravely, that Macbeth's soldiers are divided and battling on both sides, and that the castle has been taken. Malcolm in turn testifies to meeting many of the foe, who, having joined his forces, are fighting against the usurper. The scene closes with old Siward's invitation to the crown-prince to enter the castle, now in possession of his followers.

## SCENE EIGHTH

### ROMAN FOOLS

The curtain rising on the last scene, exposes another part of the battlefield, where Macbeth with bloody sword in hand stands alone, the mournful picture of a forlorn hope. His

perplexity of mind and feverish excitement, arising from fears and alarms, his face emaciated, his features drawn and worn, his hollow eyes restless and lusterless, in which the fire of valiant fury has been extinguished by utter dejection of spirits, reveal his bewilderment, chagrin, and despair. At last, he realizes that his cause is shattered, that the desperate crisis leaves him nought but flight or surrender. Flight, however, is now impossible, and his soldierly spirit scorns the thought of surrender. In his miserable plight the thought flashes upon him of other military chieftains who, after hopeless rout in battle, ended like distress by self-destruction; but as instantly he spurns the temptation, and contemns the thought of emulating those "Roman fools," as rash and unvaliant. To fall by his own sword, as long as he can use its keen edge upon the enemy, is nought but sheer cowardice. If fall he must, it shall not be upon his own blade, but upon a heap of slaughtered foes.

By the phrase "Roman fools," Shakespeare alludes to pagan times, when commanders like Brutus and Cato preferred self-destruction in defeat, rather than to live and walk, as captives, the streets of Rome to grace the triumph of the conqueror. Though suicide is a heinous crime to a Christian mind, it was to the pagan a venial offense, which appeared licit under certain conditions, and became ultimately one of the great moral plagues of the decadent civilization of ancient Greece and Rome. Pagans, immersed in idolatry, and influenced by its baneful moral doctrines, were grossly ignorant of man's noble destiny, of the main purpose of his brief existence here on earth, and possessed but hazy and corrupt views of future rewards and punishments. Its debasing principles and moral practices were swept away by the luminous doctrines of Christianity, which solved the mysteries that perplexed men's minds, taught them their relation to the Creator, as well as the sacredness and significance of human life. Hence, the ages of Faith afforded no congenial soil for the growth of the morbid tendency to suicide. Its recrudescence is, however, noted at the birth of the Renaissance. It grew with its growth, and its ravages

have reached such an intensity among all civilized nations that it may be considered the special evil of our times.<sup>1</sup> Like other moral evils, as divorce and race-suicide, its progress is seen to keep pace with the de-Christianization of a country. It is, therefore, not surprising to learn from official statistics that suicides during the nineteenth century have in Europe alone numbered a vast army of two millions, an army far outnumbering the victims of all the European wars of the same century.<sup>2</sup> As self-murder is rated a heinous crime, and is ascribed to the absence of religious influence, modern philosophers, in harmony with the Materialism of our day, are wont to explain its prevalence by the presence of some form of insanity permanent or temporary. Yet, it is clear that by far the greater number commit the crime deliberately and with premeditation. No Christian of sound mind deliberately commits self-murder unless he has, as a general rule, uprooted from mind and heart every influence of religion; for suicide is in violent contradiction to the tenets of Christian revelation, and usually, save in cases of insanity, is the culmination of a life of disorder, weakness, and cowardice. By inculcating the great supernatural truths of man's purpose in life, the importance of death, and its consequent rewards and punishments, the Christian religion not only solves the enigma of human suffering, and to a great extent prevents disorders of life, but also by its doctrine of efficacious repentance through sacramental grace, relieves overburdened souls, and so counteracts one of the chief causes that impel men to the extreme act.

### THE CHRISTIAN VIEW

Shakespeare's own view of self-murder is beyond all cavil. Himself a Christian, living in Christian times, when the moral principles of the olden Church, which was England's glory for more than a thousand years, still ruled men's minds, and when the new state religion, yet in formation, lacked virile strength to uproot traditions of ages and to dilute or destroy long cherished moral doctrines, self-murder was by

1. Jacquart: *Essais de Statistique Morale* I, *Le Suicide*.

2. Cf. Cath. *Encyclop.*—Lecky's "History of European Morals."

common law a crime—a felony—which met with penalties in the civil and religious order. In the former the suicide's goods and chattels were forfeited to the crown; in the latter, if the culprit were sane, his corpse was refused honorable or Christian burial. The Poet himself, by the lips of his philosopher, indicates the nature of the crime:

“O that the Everlasting had not fixed  
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter!”

The precepts of the natural law are ordained by the Almighty Lawgiver for man's good, and the terrible sanction which they bear is intended to deter him from their violation. This truth is the thought underlying the famous soliloquy, in which Hamlet, fully convinced that he must lose his own life in the slaying of Claudius, reflects upon his own inherent love of life and fear of death. From this thought he passes to philosophize upon the same fear of death and its cause, as common to all Christian fellowmen:

“For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,  
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,  
The pangs of disprized love, the law's delay,  
The insolence of office, and the spurns  
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,  
When he himself might his quietus make  
With a bare bodkin? Who 'd fardels bear,  
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,  
*But that the dread of something after death*  
Makes us rather bear those ills we have  
'Than fly to others that we know not of?  
Thus conscience does make *cowards of us all.*”

The Christian who would rid himself of fardels along with his weary life, is stayed by the voice of conscience. By admonishing him of the terrible doom awaiting the self-murderer, it rouses him from moral cowardice, and inspires a holy fear and dread which, born of Christian Faith, arms him with moral courage to bear those passing ills he has, rather than to fly to greater that he knows not of by experi-

ence, but only by reason and divine revelation. Hence, those pagans who in moral cowardice violated the natural law in the face of adversity, Shakespeare calls "Roman fools." Of these he speaks explicitly in the tragedy of Julius Caesar:

CASSIUS. Let's reason with the worst that may befall.

If we do lose this battle, then is this

The very last time that we shall speak together:

What are you then determined to do?

BRUTUS. Even by rule of that philosophy

By which I did blame Cato for the death

Which he did give himself: I know not how,

But I do find it cowardly and vile,

For fear of what might befall, so to pervert

The time of life: arming myself with patience,

To stay the Providence of some high powers

That govern us below.

CASSIUS.

Then, if we lose this battle,

You are contented to be led in triumph

Through the streets of Rome?

BRUTUS. No, Cassius, no: think not, thou noble Roman,

That ever Brutus will go bound to Rome;

He bears too great a mind. But this same day

Must end that work the ides of March began.<sup>1</sup> (J. Caesar, V, i.)

The battle lost, both resorted to self-destruction, rather than fall in the hands of the enemy. These lines indicate the fact that Brutus found Cato's philosophy very admirable in theory, but most impracticable and futile in the crisis of his life. It was the same with that of Socrates, and it is the same with all human philosophies. In momentous affairs of life, affairs affecting time and eternity, nought but the eternal truths of the Christian religion can aid man in bearing the fardels of a weary life, and guide him safely to his true destiny.

1. Shakespeare drew the material of this play from *Plutarch's Lives*. In it Brutus speaks as follows: "Being yet a young man, and not over greatly experienced in the world, I trust (I know not how) a certain rule of philosophy, by the which I did greatly blame and reprove Cato for killing himself. Not to give place and yield to divine Providence, and not constantly and patiently to take whatsoever it pleaseth him to send us, but to draw back and fly, is no lawful nor godly act touching the gods, nor concerning man, valiant. But now in the midst of danger, I am of a contrary mind."

Macbeth's refusal to play the "Roman fool" arose, no doubt, from varied motives. Though professing in theory the Christian religion, it exercised little influence upon his practical military life, and, in consequence, left him without the supernatural aid that he needed against the temptation of the demons. Nevertheless, he was cognizant of its chief doctrines concerning the immortality of the human soul, the nature of sin, and its fearful punishment in the life to come; hence, his rebellious conscience, which ever tortured him with the thought of his eternal doom, impelled him to complain in bitterness that he had "given his eternal jewel to the common enemy of man," and again in the overpowering sense of guilt to exclaim to Macduff: "Get thee back; my soul is too much charged with blood of thine already." This sense of the horrid doom awaiting him for having "jumped the life to come," and for having for the crown given his soul to Satan, was not only a powerful repellent against self-slaughter, but also urged him, in the madness of despair, to resist the hastening of that terrible doom, by clinging the more tenaciously to his present life. There was still one hope in the promise of the fiends, that "none of woman born would harm Macbeth." If that failed, he would then, like a warrior overtaken by fate, fall in battle with great havoc to the enemy.

### A CHARMED LIFE

Macbeth's castle already taken and victory nearly complete, Macduff, almost in despair of meeting the murderer of his family, enters hurriedly in painful eagerness of search. Absorbed in his own troubled thoughts, Macbeth fails to observe the entrance of his fated adversary. At the unexpected sight of the multi-murderer, usurper, and tyrant, Macduff feels his whole nature roused to fury, which is further inflamed by the overpowering sense of his own personal wrongs. Though in strict justice he might with a clear conscience strike down at one blow the unguarded criminal, nevertheless, even though the "hell-hound" be of greater strength and skill of sword, he refrains from an accustomed sense of chivalry, and calls on him in an infuriated voice to turn in

self-defense. Startled by the loud, angry-voiced challenge, Macbeth turns instantly and, brandishing his weapon, pauses a moment to glare upon the man whom he has so foully wronged. His strange look betrays mixed feelings: upon him rushes the thought of the evil spirit's warning, "beware Macduff," as well as the injury he has done him already; but trusting to the assurance of his own safety, he motions him away in remorseful sentiments, refusing to further stain his soul with his blood. Macduff, however, spurns to pander to the mood of a tyrant whose bloodthirstiness is beyond words of expression, and in reply rushes with flashing sword upon the murderer of his wife and children.

After a fierce but brief clash of swords, Macbeth, heedless of the forced combat from which his infuriated foe will not desist till he has slain him, pauses with startling effect to warn him of the folly of persevering in futile efforts. Bearing a charmed life against every mortal hand, he is as proof as the invulnerable air against all deadly weapons. Still enchanted by the magic spell which evil spirits had cast upon him in the cavern, he is so entangled in the snares of hell that, notwithstanding his knowledge of their evil nature, and of the fact that they have already deceived him, he yet fatuously believes in their friendship, blindly trusts to their power, and feels undoubted confidence of possessing a charmed life which must not yield to man or woman born. This sense of immunity from harm actually prompts him, in eager and earnest words, to dissuade his furious foe from hopeless efforts in an unequal contest.

### THE ENCHANTMENT BROKEN

At once divining the import of Macbeth's boastful words, and the nature of the hellish charm by which the demons still hold him in blind subjection, Macduff suddenly tears away the enchanting veil of folly and credulity by disclosing himself to be the man who, not of woman born, is the fated Nemesis of avenging justice. In accordance with his Christian faith, Shakespeare often alludes to good and bad angels, and

distinguishes between their good and evil natures and purposes. On the Christian doctrine that "ill-angels," or demons, seek to lead men astray by temptation, he bases the charge of the Chief Justice against Falstaff: "You follow the young prince up and down like his ill-angel!"<sup>1</sup>

The words of Macduff produce a sudden and wondrous change in the tyrant. At the surprising revelation which breaks his trusted charm of life and crushes his last and only hope, he staggers back as if struck by some invisible power, his face an ashen hue and his vision dimmed. In the throes of despair, he stands bewildered, discomfited, and helpless as one petrified, glaring in dumb surprise at his adversary. Feeling his courage blasted, he curses Macduff, and in wrath denouncing the lying, juggling fiends, he resolves, all too late, to put no further faith in their equivocal promises. Now, when rudely roused from fatal enchantment, he clearly perceives, in quickly flashing thoughts, how lying fiends have by fraud lured him on to a course of crime, even to destruction. Though himself guilty of cunning, deceit, and perfidy, he appears unconscious of inconsistency in denouncing the same in evil spirits. Still more astonishing is his manifest surprise at the trickery and fraud of the "juggling fiends." A Christian is aware of the perverse nature of fallen spirits and their malignant purposes, and is, therefore, usually alert against their deceitful temptations. But Macbeth sinned against light, made evil his good, and, in alliance with the fiends, played with their weapons, only to be outwitted by their greater cunning and acumen. Staggering under the blow of Macduff's revelation, he sees himself suddenly overtaken by inexorable Nemesis and, feeling his martial power blighted, refuses to continue the combat. This refusal arises not from physical cowardice but from despair of overcoming inevitable fate, which he thinks has doomed him to fall by the sword of Macduff.

The usurper's refusal to continue the combat further rouses in Macduff a supreme scorn and disdain, and in contempt he hurls against him the derisive epithet of coward, a

1. 2 Henry, I, ii, 186.

term which was the most opprobrious and stinging to a warrior whose boast was

“I dare do all that may become a man;  
Who dares do more is none.”

Macduff, furthermore, graphically describes the base treatment awaiting his prisoner. He shall expose him to the eyes of all, like a savage beast in an iron cage, where his ears shall be daily filled with the taunts and curses of a baiting rabble. Near by, on a canvas raised high on a pole before the public gaze, shall he be pictured as a rare, wild monster, and beneath it shall be written his loathsome name (ll. 1-27).

### SPURNS CONDITIONS

Without true repentance or sentiments of fruitful remorse, Macbeth, like the first murderer, seems fixed in the belief that his crimes are beyond pardon and that his soul, once bartered for the crown, is lost beyond recovery. His despair inspires a fear and terror of the awful retribution which he knows awaits him hereafter. It was this same fear that stayed his hand when tempted to play the “Roman fool”; and even now, dominating him in the presence of the “doom’s-man of fate,” it impels him to prefer a continued miserable existence rather than by death to plunge into greater misery. This all-absorbing fear, would no doubt, have driven him to accept the alternative of yielding himself a prisoner, had he met with more or less honorable conditions.

Macbeth can have no doubt of the grim determination of his adversary, whose hissing words of loathing and contempt speak the indignation, hatred, and fury of a man that is supremely wronged and will not be robbed of his sworn revenge. Realizing to the full the import of his enemy’s scornful threats, and the meaning of the indignities and ignominy to be heaped upon him, he stands in confusion, and, with shame mantling his cheek, his deep sense of pride and honor rouse him from a momentary stupor of despair to his old-time martial spirit. He, in turn excited to fury and indignation,

spurns the proffered terms of surrender, and thunders forth his resolve neither to yield nor to die other than the warrior he has lived. Then, scorning alike the "doom's-man of prophecy" and the juggling fiends that have betrayed him, he proclaims, in flaming words of madness, his last resort to the sword, and with the curse—Damned let him be who first cries for quarter—rushes in frenzied rage of despair against his antagonist. With swords clashing in fiery combat, they battle fiercely in the fury of two savage beasts with horns interlocked. The struggle is long and terrible. The frenzied vigor of Macbeth, hampered by a blind, despairing rage and recklessness, is met by Macduff with equal valor, but with masterful and surer strokes. Though under other conditions Macbeth was the better swordsman, he is not now "Bellona's bridegroom lapped in proof." His frightful madness, furious heedlessness, and desperation, inspired by the belief that he is vainly battling with the doom's-man of fate, confuse his mind, rob his sight of precision and his hand of its wonted cunning and dexterity, and, in consequence, he receives in a rash moment a fiercely lunging death-thrust, and falls prostrate at the feet of his adversary, a sacrifice to vindictive justice—the victim of his lawless passion of ambition (II. 27-34).

Though in deference to modern taste, it is the common practice to have Macbeth meet death upon the stage, it is not certain that such was the intention of the Poet. "It is possible," thinks White, "that Shakespeare or the stage-manager of his company did not deny the audience the satisfaction of seeing the usurper meet his doom, and that in subsequent 'retreat' his body was dragged off the stage for its supposed decapitation." Such was the practice according to the stage-direction of the four Folios, and in the acting copy of Kemble (1794), Macbeth is graphically pictured as uttering in dying agony his last thoughts and sentiments:

" 'T is done! the scene of life will quickly close,  
Ambition's vain delusive dreams are fled,  
And now I wake to darkness, guilt, and horror;  
I cannot bear it! Let me shake it off —

It will not be; my soul is clogged with blood.  
I cannot rise! I dare not ask for mercy —  
It is too late, hell drags me down; I sink,  
I sink, — my soul is lost forever. Oh! oh!'' [Dies]

By this passage, Garrick, in true actor's instinct, designed to enrich the scene by a spectacular tragic exhibition in which, by the display of his rare histrionic talent, he might impress upon the audience the horrible and appalling retribution with which justice overwhelms the unrepentant criminal here as well as hereafter. Though his lines are in perfect harmony with Macbeth's career and with the spirit of the play, and though merely giving by explicit expression a greater emphasis to the awe-inspiring thoughts and harrowing sentiments which are implicitly contained in Shakespeare's lines, it appears very questionable whether their addition mars or improves the scene. Such portrayal of Macbeth's horrible agony of remorse and despair, and his heart-piercing cry of a lost soul as the conquering fiends drag him down to the abyss, may have seemed to the Poet too appalling and abhorrent to Christian ears; and therefore, in better judgment, he deemed it more expedient to leave the terrors of the criminal's last moments to the imagination of his Christian audience, which could readily fill in the frightful picture with all its attendant horrors.

### A SOLDIER OF GOD

Another part of the battle-field is now disclosed as Malcolm, accompanied by old Siward and the thanes, enters at the head of his forces. As he regrets the absence of certain leaders, he is assured that, though some fell in battle, the numbers present prove that the victory was won without great loss. When Malcolm, however, notes the absence of young Siward and Macduff, Ross announces to the old warrior the death of his son. Consistent with his character of an accomplished but time-serving courtier, his thoughts are cast in his usual high-flown style: young Siward had lived long enough to reach the age of manhood, only to prove his valor by meeting death in fearless combat like a man.

At the tragic news the stern warrior exhibits no signs of mental grief nor of sensible emotion, but, wholly concerned with the manner of his son's death, inquires whether he fell fighting with the enemy or received his mortal wound in retreat. On learning the truth, he grimly rejoices that his son, as a soldier of God, died in the noble cause of justice, nor would he wish any son of his to meet a more honorable death. The Poet here again delicately hints at the nature and cause of the war; the invading army were "the soldiers of God," and in His name the saintly Edward had commissioned Siward to overthrow a usurper and monstrous tyrant and to restore with the rightful heir the reign of law and justice among a neighboring, suffering people. Ruled by this thought of his noble mission, old Siward disregards proffered words of condolence; his son had fallen bravely in the cause of God, and his death was but the payment of a debt decreed unto mortals by divine Justice: "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment."<sup>1</sup>

"A man can die but once: we owe God a death."<sup>2</sup>

Accordingly, he merely prays that God may be propitious to him in the other world. Such and similar prayers are shown by Shakespeare's writings to have been commonly on the lips of Christian peoples of his day. The prayer of the noble and Christian-minded warrior has, however, in our modern and materialistic age, been sadly corrupted into the meaningless phrase, "Good-bye."

At this juncture, Macduff, breathless and excited, and with signs of his fierce combat with the tyrant, enters, bearing aloft on a pike "the usurper's cursed head." "It is worth observing," says Fletcher, "that the very fact of Shakespeare's making Macduff, after killing his antagonist off the stage, reënter with 'the usurper's cursed head' upon a pole, is a final and striking indication that he meant Macbeth to die by all unpitied and abhorred."

1. Heb. 9:27.

2. King Henry VI, V, v.

**HAIL, KING OF SCOTLAND**

Macduff, in the presence of Malcolm and the nobles of the realm, glories that his country now is free, and as he sees the royal prince surrounded by the nobles, the pearls of the kingdom, he in fancy beholds his brow already encircled with the pearly diadem. Reading his own thoughts in the minds of his fellow-nobles, he summons all to voice them forth with him in the salutation, "Hail, king of Scotland!" At once, amid resounding blasts of trumpets, all, bending low in homage, hail Malcolm, their king (ll. 35-59).

If, according to Clarendon, Shakespeare's part in the play ends, in all likelihood, with the combat and death of the tyrant, it is, nevertheless, customary on the stage to close the drama with the spectacular scene wherein, amid peals of trumpets, the nobles and allied forces, in joyous shouts of triumph, proclaim Malcolm the king of Scotland. Against the customary omission of the prince's closing speech, Fletcher aptly writes: "The omission seems to us to be alike senseless and useless. Shakespeare knew the art of appropriately closing a drama no less than that of opening it happily. These lines from the restored prince not only draw together in one plot, as is requisite, the several surviving threads of interest, but show us decisively the predominant impression which the dramatist intended to leave on the minds of his audience. They are like a gleam of evening sunshine, bidding 'farewell sweet,' after 'so fair and foul a day.' " Moreover, as tragedy exhibits the struggle of good and evil in the world, with the reward of the one and the punishment of the other, it was incumbent upon the Poet, after having given us a master-picture of a man who, in the blindness of egotism and ambition, had boldly defied the powers of Heaven and, in consequence, had fallen beneath the iron hand of inexorable Nemesis, to portray in opposite and striking colors the triumph and reward of virtue by bringing into prominence the noble Malcolm, in whose person Heaven vindicates justice and restores the rights and liberties of a people suffering from the violation of the moral order.

The main thoughts of Malcolm's closing speech are borrowed from the *Chronicles of Holinshed*.<sup>1</sup> The prince promises to waste no time in requiting his loving and loyal friends. His kinsmen and thanes he elevates to the rank of earldom, and so introduces into Scotland a new title of nobility. The ideas of "cruel ministers," and of recalling home "exiled friends that fled the snares of watchful tyranny," are not recorded in *Holinshed*. They are the Poet's own thoughts, and are, as some writers think, intended to pay another and last compliment to the new sovereign. Such an opinion appears, indeed, very probable, if we recall that *Macbeth* was composed shortly after the coronation of James I. For Elizabeth, his predecessor, the King always manifested a strong antipathy, openly reproached her morals, and felt so keenly the injury she inflicted on his mother that the mere mention of her name stirred him to anger. "When the French ambassador ordered his suite, according to custom, to dress in mourning for Elizabeth, it was considered by James as an insult, and he was compelled to revoke the order."<sup>2</sup>

This royal aversion was equally shared by Puritans and Catholics; both had suffered persecution under Elizabeth, and both in the hope of relief hailed with joy the accession of the son of Mary Stuart. Flattered by the hope that their attachment to the House of Stuart, and their sacrifice of blood and treasure in the cause of his unfortunate mother, as well as by promises made to their envoys, the suffering Catholics looked to the son of the Queen of Scots to put an end to religious persecution. They belonged to the party agitating for freedom of worship; and adherents of this party, be it said with credit, were Shakespeare and his associates from Stratford. The leaders were the earls of Essex, Pembroke, and Southampton, all warm friends and patrons of the Poet. Essex was executed,

1. *Holinshed's* authority is *Boyce's Scotorum Historiae*, which was first printed in Paris in 1526 and translated into the Scotch dialect in 1541. "Malcolm thus recovering the realm by support of King Edward, in the year 16 of the same Edward's reign, was crowned at Scone the 25th day of April, 1057. Immediately after his coronation he called a parliament at Forfar, in which he rewarded with lands and livings that had assisted him against Macbeth. He created many earls, lord, barons, and knights. Many thanes were made earls, the first that have been heard of among Scotchmen."

2. *Sully Memoirs*, I, 14.

Pembroke exiled, and Southampton, incarcerated in the Tower, awaited the penalty of death from which he escaped only by the demise of Elizabeth. If, therefore, the "Virgin Queen," by the persecution of Shakespeare's friends and patrons, earned his aversion, James won his love and gratitude by favors. As soon as the King of Scots had learned, while still in Edinburgh, of his accession to the English throne, he invited the prisoner in the Tower "to meet him, his friend and sovereign, at York." Arriving in London, James restored to the young earl of Essex and to the earl of Southampton their titles and estates of which Elizabeth had deprived them. James, moreover, invited Catholics to frequent his court, conferred on several the honor of knighthood, and promised to shield them from the penalties of recusancy—a penalty to which the Poet's father had been more than once subjected. Such acts were received by the party of religious toleration as pledges of subsequent and more valuable concessions.<sup>1</sup> In view of these circumstances and the parallelism already shown between Lady Macbeth, Duncan, and Malcolm on the one side and Elizabeth, the Queen of Scots, and James on the other, and furthermore recalling the fact that Shakespeare composed the tragedy shortly after the accession of James and manifests his gratitude therein by way of many compliments to his royal benefactor, it is not over strange that several writers see in the Poet's words an invitation to the new sovereign to emulate the noble example of Malcolm by putting an end to the Elizabethan persecution. Let him revoke the policy of "cruel ministers" and recall from abroad "exiled friends that fled the snares of watchful tyranny."

Relying as a Christian upon "the grace of Grace," Malcolm promises to perform all that his new position demands according to "measure, time, and place." Annotators adduce many examples in proof of the Poet's fondness for redoubled words, as—"for the love of love," and "upon his brow shame is ashamed to sit." In the words, "by the grace of Grace," Shakespeare indicates Malcolm's Christian character. Already had he spoken of his royal father, "a most sainted king," and

1. Cf. Lingard's History of England, Vol. VII, C. 1.

of the pious Queen, his mother, who with maternal devotion had instructed him from his tender years in Christian morals, and inured him to the practice of those "king-becoming graces" or virtues which would fit him for his future royal position. True to this training, he now as king recognizes his new obligations and relies upon the "grace of Grace" for their fulfillment. He closes the fateful tragedy by offering heartfelt thanks to loyal adherents and inviting all to Scone to attend his immediate coronation (ll. 59-75).

## EPILOGUE

In no other drama does the Poet hold so well the mirror up to nature. Macbeth is a universal type, true to all times in which every mortal tempted by some ruling passion may see himself reflected. To the tragic writer, man, the plaything of his passions, is "a pendulum betwixt a smile and tear"; and to him, above all others,

"The proper study of mankind is man,"

with all the virtues and the vices of his conflicting passions, his ever changing purposes and impelling motives, with their consequences for time and eternity. If the soul of tragedy be some great rebellion in the moral world, and its theme the shock of mighty passions against human and divine laws, then the higher these passions surge, the more fascinating becomes the interest; the bolder the transgression, the grander the action and the more tragic the catastrophe. In every instance arises an inevitable conflict between man's unbridled will and the moral order, in which the transgression, reacting upon the transgressor, involves him in overwhelming doom.

As a master-artist imbued with the Christian spirit, Shakespeare comprehends to the full the moral purpose of the tragedy and brings it into harmony with the Christian view of human life. If bad men are successful in their evil projects, he never fails to show them overtaken by an avenging Nemesis, which persistently follows in the footsteps of guilt. If innocent persons suffer, he makes them amiable in virtue, and their condition preferable to that of bad men who prevail against them. The triumph of evil is but momentary or apparent; it always brings stings and remorse of guilt and leads to greater sufferings than any the bad can inflict upon the good. Exciting love and admiration for virtuous characters, compassion for the injured and distressed, and indignation against the authors of their sufferings, his tragedies awaken our moral sensibilities, strengthen our interest in behalf of virtue, and so

leave upon our minds and hearts an impression favorable to virtue and humanity.

The burden of tragedy is the conflict of human passions, and these are motive powers or impulses which, implanted in our nature for good, man can, as a free agent, direct to good or evil. In a strict sense they are organic affections aroused by sensible good or evil, and are intended by the Creator to aid man in the attainment of happiness. If the names of various passions are oftentimes applied to affections of the will that result from intellectual cognition, it is merely in an analogous sense; such are moral emotions as evidenced in our admiration of virtue and detestation of vice. As a part of man's nature, passions are neither essentially bad nor imply any defect but rather a perfection. If some are called bad, it is in the sense that they are more liable than others to abuse or excess. Good in themselves, they become bad only when in rebellion against man's higher nature or will enlightened by reason.

This rebellion is the result of the first fall which wounded and vitiated man's moral nature; for, deprived of the preternatural gift of integrity in punishment of his sin, he began to experience the sting of inordinate concupiscence, the rebellion of the flesh against the spirit. Of this conflict the Apostle speaks: "And I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind and captivating me in the law of sin that is in my members."<sup>1</sup> As a consequence, a Christian man is subject to a lifelong struggle with his corrupt moral nature, and this struggle is reduced to a conflict with his rebellious passions. Those of his lower nature, being blind and irrational impulses that often anticipate and resist the dictates of reason, must be repressed and governed, while those of his nobler nature must, by the light of reason, be directed to his higher good. Both become strong allies of virtue, if controlled and compelled to recognize the higher law of the spirit. Man's moral perfection is proportioned to his habit of controlling and directing his passions aright. As

1. Rom. VII, 23. The rebellion of the flesh against the spirit, the Apostle calls the law of sin, because it comes from original sin and inclines to sin.

great mainsprings of action, the greater their energy the greater is man's capability for good or evil. The saint as well as the great sinner is endowed with strong passions, with the difference that the saint directs them to good while the sinner abuses them for evil. Cast in the same human mold were the heroes of the cross and of the world; both rose to heroism by means of grand passions which, as uncommon energies, they directed to good and noble purposes.

In the human frame, however, are many passions which, as diverging forces, are often in antagonism or tend in different or opposite directions. Among them is usually in every individual one which strives to control or govern all others. If thwarted or repressed, it never fails to reassert itself in persistent combat for the mastery, and this once obtained it dominates with iron hand the weaker passions, neutralizes their influence, or changes their direction. Instances are innumerable.

An unbeliever or infidel, for example, will not be restrained from indulging his passion of concupiscence by conscientious motives or the force of moral principles; but, if personal interests, such as his social standing, reputation, honor, or ambition be at stake, his pride will be strong enough to overcome his sensuality. These considerations are, on the other hand, impotent with the inebriate. In vain may his friends chide him for his folly; in vain may they expose how his besotting passion entails the loss of business, reputation, friends, and honor, and brings disgrace and impoverishment upon his wife and children; mastered by his debasing habit, the toper proves indifferent to the voice of conscience and, deaf to the clamorous protests of other passions, is content to sacrifice at the ignoble shrine of Bacchus all interests, temporal and eternal, all that ennobles man and makes his life worth the living.

As a domestic of our fallen nature, the dominant passion too often gaining ascendancy over reason and the moral law, is loved, fostered, and defended, even though a secret, treacherous, and obstinate foe. In cunning it "transforms itself into an angel of light," and to maintain the mastery is accus-

tomed to work under the guise of charity or prudence or liberality or magnanimity or other laudable qualities:

“O, what authority and show of truth  
Can cunning sin cover itself withal.”<sup>1</sup>

“There is no vice so simple but assumes  
Some mask of virtue on its outward parts.”<sup>2</sup>

Once in command it becomes a Jebusite which arms the tempting demons with their greatest power against us. To its charge must be laid the greater number of the vices and evils that afflict mankind. It was at work in the sacrilege of Heliodorus, in Herod's massacre of the innocents, in the avarice of Judas, in the jealousy of the pharisees, in Pilate's travesty of justice, in heresiarchs whose pride engendered religious strife, and in the tyrant whose lust severed a kingdom from the unity and faith of Christendom.<sup>3</sup>

To know the ruling passion is to possess the key to a man's interior disposition and to his attractions and aversions. A man's biography is the portrayal of his character and interior disposition; and these are best revealed by his master-passion, which in its development and primal influence imparts to his whole life and action the peculiar tone and distinctive color that distinguished him from others. Hence, by the portrayal

1. Much Ado About Nothing (IV, 1).

2. Merch. of Venice (III, ii).

3. This severance, the pamphlet of the Hon. Nathaniel Mickelbam, K. C., a member of the English Bench for years, states with legal conciseness: "Up to the time of Henry VIII it seems impossible to point to a single difference in faith held in England from the faith held in Rome, or to any collision between the ecclesiastical law of England and Rome. They were one and the same. In the Middle Ages the Catholic faith, with its center at Rome, had its churches—its provincial churches everywhere; and, among others, the provincial church of England—or rather the provincial churches of England, for the provinces of Canterbury and York were quite distinct. As Maitland says: 'Too often we speak of the "Church of England" and forget that there was no ecclesiastically organized church that answered to that name. No tie of an ecclesiastical or spiritual kind bound the bishop of Chichester to the bishop of Carlisle, except that which bound them both to French and Spanish bishops.' Of the *Ecclesia Anglicana* the Pope was not merely spiritual head: he was also its supreme judge, and the judges of ecclesiastical cases in England were judges appointed by him. The law they administered was the canon law of Rome. For this international church ruled by the Papal canon law was substituted an insular church ruled by Parliamentary law. In other words, under the statutes of Parliament there comes in to being 'the Church of England by law established,' as it is called in the Canons Ecclesiastical of 1603, an entirely different body, governed by an entirely different law, and under entirely different conditions of the earlier Church."

of different characters in whom the ruling passion has full sway, Shakespeare has made his tragedies perfect biographies. They reveal his complete knowledge of the diapason of man's emotions, and his skillful sweep lifts him beyond compare with all other artists. His is the mastery of the harpstrings of the human heart, and upon them with a minstrel's bold touch he strikes at will the wild, dominant tones of the passions, and we hear strange music, ever changing in pathos, in wildness, in sublimity, and in terror, all in harmony with the varied themes of love, or jealousy, or patriotism, or pride, or revenge, or sensuality.

While displaying Shakespeare's intimate acquaintance with the emotions of the human heart, the tragedy, moreover, inculcates the moral necessity of self-knowledge and self-conquest. It pictures graphically in light and shade

"How like a devil in the heart  
Rules the unreined ambition."

With Cicero it teaches that "virtue is consistent only with moderation and moral restraints of our rational nature." Pride begets ambition, and in ambitious pride

"Men would be angels and angels would be God."

Against such irrational inflation of mind and heart, the Poet cautions us by the lips of another victim:

"Mark but my fall and that that ruined me.  
Cromwell, I charge thee, fling away ambition:  
By that sin fell the angels; how can man then  
The image of his Maker, hope to win by it"?<sup>1</sup>

Happy had been Macbeth had he

"Banished the canker of ambitious thoughts;"<sup>2</sup>

happy had he obeyed the caution uttered by his nobler self:

1. Henry VIII, III, ii.  
2. Hen. VI, Part II, I, ii.

“I have no spur  
To prick the sides of my intent, but only  
Vaulting ambition, which o’erleaps itself  
And falls on th’ other side.”

Happy had he halted his wild passion at the foreseen consequence that Duncan’s virtues

“Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongued against  
The deep damnation of his taking off.”

In Macbeth, as a universal type, is exposed the spiritual significance of temptation common to every man, as well as the fatal folly of yielding up our free will to the powers of evil in exchange for the gratification of some passion. In him the Poet emphasizes the dominant idea that man, as a free and untrammelled agent, is, in the midst of temptation with the acceptance of grace or its rejection, the architect not only of his own character for good or evil, but also of his eternal destiny.

In truth, the chronicles of every nation are simply the story, on the one hand, of monarchs, and statesmen, and warriors who, enslaved by their ruling passions, have inflicted evils on their fellow men and live accursed in memory, and, on the other hand, of great heroes in the civil and religious world who, by guiding their ruling passions to the interests of the state or religion, have elevated man by the promotion of his temporal or spiritual good and live immortalized in the honored memory of future generations. Hence, History’s pages are emblazoned in honor or in shame with the story of characters who, battling either under the standard of virtue or of vice, have shown forth the same truth that is emphasized so forcibly in the tragedy of Macbeth, the truth that passions are wings whereby at will we fly to heaven or to hell.

## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

DUNCAN, King of Scotland.

MALCOLM, }  
DONALBAIN, } his sons.

MACBETH, }  
BANQUO, } generals of the King's army.

MACDUFF, }  
LENNOX, }  
ROSS, } noblemen of Scotland.  
MENTEITH, }  
ANGUS, }  
CAITHNESS, }

FLEANCE, son to Banquo.

SIWARD, earl of Northumberland, general of the English forces.

Young SIWARD, his son.

SEYTON, an officer attending on Macbeth.

Boy, son to Macduff.

An English Doctor.

A Scotch Doctor.

A Captain.

A Porter.

An Old Man.

Lady MACBETH.

Lady MACDUFF.

Gentlewoman attending on Lady Macbeth.

HECATE.

Three Witches.

Apparitions.

Lords, Gentlemen, Officers, Soldiers, Murderers, Attendants,  
and Messengers.

SCENE: *Scotland; England.*

# THE TRAGEDY OF MACBETH

## ACT I

### SCENE I. *A desert place*

*Thunder and lightning. Enter three WITCHES*

1 WITCH. When shall we three meet again  
In thunder, lightning, or in rain?

2 WITCH. When the hurlyburly's done,  
When the battle's lost and won.

5 3 WITCH. That will be ere the set of sun.

1 WITCH. Where the place?

2 WITCH. Upon the heath.

3 WITCH. There to meet with Macbeth.

1 WITCH. I come, Graymalkin.

ALL. Paddock calls: — Anon!

10 Fair is foul and foul is fair;  
Hover through the fog and filthy air. [*Exeunt.*]

### SCENE II. *A camp near Forres*

*Alarum within. Enter DUNCAN, MALCOLM, DONALBAIN, LENNOX, with Attendants, meeting a bleeding CAPTAIN*

DUNCAN. What bloody man is that? He can report,  
As seemeth by his plight, of the revolt  
The newest state.

MALCOLM. This is the sergeant  
Who like a good and hardy soldier fought  
5 'Gainst my captivity. Hail, brave friend!  
Say to the king thy knowledge of the broil  
As thou didst leave it.

CAPTAIN. Doubtful it stood,  
As two spent swimmers that do cling together  
And choke their art. The merciless Macdonwald—  
10 Worthy to be a rebel, for to that  
The multiplying villainies of nature

- Do swarm upon him—from the western isles  
Of kerns and gallowglasses is supplied;  
And fortune, on his damned quarry smiling,  
15 Show'd like a rebel's whore: but all's too weak;  
For brave Macbeth—well he deserves that name—  
Disdaining fortune, with his brandish'd steel,  
Which smok'd with bloody execution,  
Like valour's minion carv'd out his passage  
20 Till he fac'd the slave;  
Which ne'er shook hands, nor bade farewell to him,  
Till he unseam'd him from the nave to th' chops,  
And fix'd his head upon our battlements.

DUNCAN. O valiant cousin! worthy gentleman!

- 25 CAPTAIN. As whence the sun 'gins his reflection  
Shipwrecking storms and direful thunders,  
So from that spring whence comfort seem'd to come  
Discomfort swells. Mark, king of Scotland, mark:  
No sooner justice had, with valour arm'd,  
30 Compell'd these skipping kerns to trust their heels;  
But the Norweyan lord, surveying vantage,  
With furbish'd arms and new supplies of men,  
Began a fresh assault.

DUNCAN. Dismay'd not this  
Our captains, Macbeth and Banquo?

CAPTAIN. Yes;

- 35 As sparrows eagles, or the hare the lion.  
If I say sooth, I must report they were  
As cannons overcharg'd with double cracks;  
So they doubly redoubled strokes upon the foe:  
Except they meant to bathe in reeking wounds,  
40 Or memorize another Golgotha,  
I cannot tell—  
But I am faint, my gashes cry for help.

DUNCAN. So well thy words become thee as thy wounds;  
They smack of honour both. Go get him surgeons.

[Exit CAPTAIN, attended]

*Enter Ross and Angus*

- 45 Who comes here?

MALCOLM. The worthythane of Ross.

LENNOX. What a haste looks through his eyes! So should he look

That seems to speak things strange.

ROSS.

God save the king!

DUNCAN. Whence cam'st thou, worthy thane?

ROSS.

From Fife, great king;

Where the Norweyan banners flout the sky

50 And fan our people cold.

Norway himself, with terrible numbers,

Assisted by that most disloyal traitor,

The thane of Cawdor, began a dismal conflict;

Till that Bellona's bridegroom, lapp'd in proof,

55 Confronted him with self-comparisons,

Point against point, rebellious arm 'gainst arm,

Curbing his lavish spirit; and, to conclude,

The victory fell on us.

DUNCAN.

Great happiness!

ROSS.

That now

Sweno, the Norways' king, craves composition;

60 Nor would he deign him burial of his men

Till he disbursed, at Saint Colme's inch,

Ten thousand dollars to our general use.

DUNCAN. No more that thane of Cawdor shall deceive

Our bosom interest. Go pronounce his present death,

65 And with his former title greet Macbeth.

ROSS. I'll see it done.

DUNCAN. What he hath lost, noble Macbeth hath won. [*Exeunt*]

### SCENE III. *A heath*

*Thunder. Enter the three WITCHES*

1 WITCH. Where hast thou been, sister?

2 WITCH. Killing swine.

3 WITCH. Sister, where thou?

1 WITCH. A sailor's wife had chestnuts in her lap,

5 And munch'd, and munch'd, and munch'd. 'Give me,'  
quoit I:

'Aroint thee, witch!' the rump-fed ronyon cries.

Her husband's to Aleppo gone, master o' the Tiger:

But in a sieve I'll thither sail,

And, like a rat without a tail,

10 I'll do, I'll do, and I'll do.

2 WITCH. I'll give thee a wind.

1 WITCH. Thou'rt kind.

3 WITCH. . And I another.

1 WITCH. I myself have all the other;

15 And the very points they blow,  
All the quarters that they know  
I' the shipman's card.

I'll drain him dry as hay.

Sleep shall neither night nor day

20 Hang upon his pent-house lid;  
He shall live a man forbid:

Weary se'nnights nine times nine

Shall he dwindle, peak, and pine:

Though his bark cannot be lost,

25 Yet it shall be tempest-tost.

Look what I have.

2 WITCH. Show me, show me.

1 WITCH. Here I have a pilot's thumb,

Wreck'd as homeward he did come. [*Drum within*]

30 3 WITCH. A drum, a drum!

Macbeth doth come.

ALL. The weird sisters, hand in hand,

Posters of the sea and land,

Thus do go about, about:

35 Thrice to thine, and thrice to mine,

And thrice again to make up nine.

Peace! the charm's wound up.

*Enter MACBETH and BANQUO*

MACBETH. So foul and fair a day I have not seen.

BANQUO. How far is't call'd to Forres? What are these

40 So wither'd, and so wild in their attire,

That look not like th' inhabitants o' the earth,

And yet are on 't? Live you? or are ye aught

That man may question? You seem to understand me,

By each at once her choppy finger laying

45 Upon her skinny lips: you should be women,

And yet your beards forbid me to interpret

That you are so.

MACBETH. Speak, if you can: what are you?

1 WITCH. All hail, Macbeth! hail to thee, thane of Glamis!

2 WITCH. All hail, Macbeth! hail to thee, thane of Cawdor!

50 3 WITCH. All hail, Macbeth, that shalt be king hereafter!

BANQUO. Good sir, why do you start, and seem to fear  
Things that do sound so fair?—I' the name of truth,  
Are ye fantastical, or that indeed  
Which outwardly ye show? My noble partner

55 You greet with present grace and great prediction  
Of noble having and of royal hope,  
That he seems rapt withal; to me you speak not.

If you can look into the seeds of time,  
And say which grain will grow and which will not,

60 Speak, then, to me, who neither beg nor fear  
Your favours nor your hate.

1 WITCH. Hail!

2 WITCH. Hail!

3 WITCH. Hail!

65 1 WITCH. Lesser than Macbeth, and greater.

2 WITCH. Not so happy, yet much happier.

3 WITCH. Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none:  
So all hail, Macbeth and Banquo!

1 WITCH. Banquo and Macbeth, all hail!

70 MACBETH. Stay, you imperfect speakers, tell me more:

By Sinel's death I know I amthane of Glamis;  
But how of Cawdor? thethane of Cawdor lives,  
A prosperous gentleman; and to be king  
Stands not within the prospect of belief

75 No more than to be Cawdor. Say from whence

You owe this strange intelligence? or why

Upon this blasted heath you stop our way

With such prophetic greeting? Speak, I charge you.

[WITCHES *vanish*]

BANQUO. The earth hath bubbles as the water has,

80 And these are of them. Whither are they vanish'd?

MACBETH. Into the air; and what seem'd corporal melted  
As breath into the wind. Would they had stay'd!

BANQUO. Were such things here as we do speak about?

Or have we eaten on the insane root

85 That takes the reason prisoner?

MACBETH. Your children shall be kings.

BANQUO.

You shall be king.

MACBETH. Andthane of Cawdor, too: went it not so?

BANQUO. To the selfsame tune and words. Who's here?

*Enter ROSS and ANGUS*

ROSS. The king hath happily receiv'd, Macbeth,  
 90 The news of thy success: and, when he reads  
 Thy personal venture in the rebels' fight,  
 His wonders and his praise do contend  
 Which should be thine or his: silenc'd with that,  
 In viewing o'er the rest o' the selfsame day,  
 95 He finds thee in the stout Norweyan ranks,  
 (Nothing afeard of what thyself didst make,  
 Strange images of death. As thick as tale  
 Came post with post; and every one did bear  
 Thy praises in his kingdom's great defence,  
 100 And pour'd them down before him.

ANGUS. We are sent  
 To give thee from our royal master thanks;  
 Only to herald thee into his sight,  
 Not pay thee.

ROSS. And, for an earnest of a greater honour,  
 105 He bade me, from him, call thee thane of Cawdor;  
 In which addition, hail, most worthy thane!  
 For it is thine.

BANQUO. [*Aside*] What, can the devil speak true?

MACBETH. The thane of Cawdor lives: why do you dress me  
 In borrow'd robes?

ANGUS. Who was the thane lives yet;  
 110 But under heavy judgment bears that life  
 Which he deserves to lose. Whether he was combin'd  
 With those of Norway, or did line the rebel  
 With hidden help and vantage, or that with both  
 He labour'd in his country's wreck, I know not;  
 115 But treasons capital, confess'd and prov'd,  
 Have overthrown him.

MACBETH. [*Aside*] Glamis, and thane of Cawdor!  
 The greatest is behind. [*To ROSS and ANGUS*] Thanks for your  
 pains.

[*To BANQUO*] Do you not hope your children shall be kings,  
 When those that gave the thane of Cawdor to me  
 Promis'd no less to them?

120 BANQUO. That trusted home  
 Might yet enkindle you unto the crown,  
 Besides the thane of Cawdor. But 't is strange;

And oftentimes, to win us to our harm,  
The instruments of darkness tell us truths,  
125 Win us with honest trifles, to betray 's  
In deepest consequence.  
Cousins, a word, I pray you.

MACBETH. [Aside] Two truths are told,  
As happy prologues to the swelling act  
Of the imperial theme. — I thank you, gentlemen. —  
130 [Aside] This supernatural soliciting  
Cannot be ill; cannot be good: if ill,  
Why hath it given me earnest of success,  
Commencing in a truth? I amthane of Cawdor:  
If good, why do I yield to that suggestion  
135 Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair  
And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,  
Against the use of nature? Present fears  
Are less than horrible imaginings.  
My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical,  
140 Shakes so my single state of man that function  
Is smother'd in surmise, and nothing is  
But what is not.

BANQUO. Look, how our partner 's rapt.

MACBETH. [Aside] If chance will have me king, why, chance may  
crown me,  
Without my stir.

BANQUO. New honours come upon him,  
145 Like our strange garments, cleave not to their mould  
But with the aid of use.

MACBETH. [Aside] Come what come may,  
Time and the hour runs through the roughest day.

BANQUO. Worthy Macbeth, we stay upon your leisure.

MACBETH. Give me your favour: my dull brain was wrought  
150 With things forgotten. Kind gentlemen, your pains  
Are register'd where every day I turn  
The leaf to read them. Let us toward the king.  
Think upon what hath chanc'd; and, at more time,  
The interim having weigh'd it, let us speak  
Our free hearts each to other.

155 BANQUO. Very gladly.

MACBETH. Till then, enough. Come, friends. [Exeunt]

SCENE IV. *Forres. The palace*

*Flourish. Enter DUNCAN, MALCOLM, DONALBAIN, LENNOX, and Attendants*

DUNCAN. Is execution done on Cawdor? Are not  
Those in commission yet return'd?

MALCOLM. My liege,  
They are not yet come back. But I have spoke  
With one that saw him die; who did report  
5 That very frankly he confess'd his treasons,  
Implor'd your highness' pardon, and set forth  
A deep repentance: nothing in his life  
Became him like the leaving it; he died  
As one that had been studied in his death  
10 To throw away the dearest thing he ow'd,  
As 't were a careless trifle.

DUNCAN. There 's no art  
To find the mind's construction in the face:  
He was a gentleman on whom I built  
An absolute trust.

*Enter MACBETH, BANQUO, ROSS, and ANGUS*

O worthiest cousin!  
15 The sin of my ingratitude even now  
Was heavy on me. Thou art so far before,  
That swiftest wing of recompense is slow  
To overtake thee. Would thou hadst less deserv'd,  
That the proportion both of thanks and payment  
20 Might have been mine! Only I have left to say,  
More is thy due than more than all can pay.

MACBETH. The service and the loyalty I owe,  
In doing it, pays itself. Your highness' part  
Is to receive our duties; and our duties  
25 Are to your throne and state children and servants;  
Which do but what they should, by doing every thing  
Safe toward your love and honour.

DUNCAN. Welcome hither:  
I have begun to plant thee, and will labour  
To make thee full of growing. Noble Banquo,  
30 That hast no less deserv'd, nor must be known  
No less to have done so, let me infold thee

And hold thee to my heart.

[illegible]

DUNCAN. My plenteous joys,

Wanton in fulness, seek to hide themselves  
 35 In drops of sorrow. Sons, kinsmen, thanes,  
 And you whose places are the nearest, know,  
 We will establish our estate upon  
 Our eldest, Malcolm, whom we name hereafter  
 The Prince of Cumberland; which honour must  
 40 Not unaccompanied invest him only,  
 But signs of nobleness, like stars, shall shine  
 On all deservers. From hence to Inverness,  
 And bind us further to you.

MACBETH. The rest is labour, which is not us'd for you.

45 I 'll be myself the harbinger, and make joyful  
The hearing of my wife with your approach;  
So humbly take my leave.

DUNCAN. My worthy Cawdor!

MACBETH. [*Aside*] The Prince of Cumberland! that is a step  
On which I must fall down, or else o'erleap,  
For in my way it lies. Stars, hide your fires;  
Let not light see my black and deep desires;  
The eye wink at the hand; yet let that be  
Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see.

[Exit]

DUNCAN. True, worthy Banquo; he is full so valiant,  
55 And in his commendations I am fed;  
It is a banquet to me. Let 's after him,  
Whose care is gone before to bid us welcome.  
It is a peerless kinsman. [Flourish]

[*Flourish. Exeunt*]

SCENE V. *Inverness.* MACBETH'S castle

*Enter* LADY MACBETH, *alone, with a letter*

LADY MACBETH. [*Reads*] They met me in the day of success; and I have learn'd by the perfect 'st report, they have more in them than mortal knowledge. When I burn'd in desire to question them further, they made themselves air, into which they vanish'd. Whiles I stood rapt in the wonder of it, came missives from the King, who all-hail'd me 'Thane of Cawdor'; by which title, before, these weird sisters saluted me, and referr'd me to the coming on of time,

with ' Hail, king that shalt be! ' This have I thought good to deliver thee, my dearest partner of greatness, that thou mightst not lose the dues of rejoicing, by being ignorant of what greatness is promis'd  
12 thee. Lay it to thy heart, and farewell.

Glamis thou art, and Cawdor, and shalt be  
What thou art promis'd. Yet do I fear thy nature;  
It is too full o' the milk of human kindness  
To catch the nearest way: thou wouldst be great;  
Art not without ambition, but without  
19 The illness should attend it: what thou wouldst highly,  
That wouldst thou holily; wouldst not play false,  
And yet wouldst wrongly win: thou 'ldst have, great Glamis,  
21 That which cries, ' Thus thou must do,' if thou have it;  
And that which rather thou dost fear to do  
Than wishest should be undone. Hie thee hither,  
That I may pour my spirits in thine ear,  
25 And chastise with the valour of my tongue  
All that impedes thee from the golden round  
Which fate and metaphysical aid doth seem  
To have thee crown'd withal.

*Enter a MESSENGER*

What is your tidings?

MESSENGER. The king comes here to-night.

LADY MACBETH.

Thou 'rt mad to say it:

30 Is not thy master with him? who, were 't so,  
Would have inform'd for preparation.

MESSENGER. So please you, it is true; our thane is coming.  
One of my fellows had the speed of him,  
Who, almost dead for breath, had scarcely more  
Than would make up his message.

35 LADY MACBETH.

Give him tending;

He brings great news.

[*Exit MESSENGER*]

The raven himself is hoarse  
That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan  
Under my battlements. Come, you spirits  
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here;  
40 And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full  
Of direst cruelty! make thick my blood;  
Stop up th' access and passage to remorse,

That no compunctious visitings of nature  
 Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between  
 45 The effect and it! Come to my woman's breasts,  
 And take my milk for gall, you murd'ring ministers,  
 Wherever in your sightless substances  
 You wait on nature's mischief! Come, thick night,  
 And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,  
 50 That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,  
 Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark,  
 To cry, " Hold, hold! "

*Enter MACBETH*

Great Glamis! worthy Cawdor!  
 Greater than both, by the all-hail hereafter!  
 Thy letters have transported me beyond  
 55 This ignorant present, and I feel now  
 The future in the instant.

MACBETH. My dearest love,  
 Duncan comes here to-night.

LADY MACBETH. And when goes hence?

MACBETH. To-morrow, as he purposes.

LADY MACBETH. O, never  
 Shall sun that morrow see!

60 Your face, my thane, is as a book where men  
 May read strange matters. To beguile the time,  
 Look like the time; bear welcome in your eye,  
 Your hand, your tongue; look like the innocent flower,  
 But be the serpent under 't. He that 's coming  
 65 Must be provided for; and you shall put  
 This night's great business into my dispatch,  
 Which shall to all our nights and days to come  
 Give solely sovereign sway and masterdom.

MACBETH. We will speak further.

LADY MACBETH. Only look up clear;

70 To alter favour ever is to fear.  
 Leave all the rest to me.

[*Exeunt*]

SCENE VI. *Before MACBETH'S castle*

*Hautboys and torches. Enter DUNCAN, MALCOLM, DONALBAIN,  
 BANQUO, LENNOX, MACDUFF, ROSS, ANGUS and Attendants*

DUNCAN. This castle hath a pleasant seat; the air  
Nimble and sweetly recommends itself  
Unto our gentle senses.

BANQUO. This guest of summer,  
The temple-haunting martlet, does approve,  
5 By his lov'd mansionry, that the heaven's breath-  
Smells wooingly here: no jutty, frieze,  
Buttress, nor coign of vantage, but this bird  
Hath made his pendent bed and procereant cradle:  
Where they most breed and haunt, I have observ'd  
The air is delicate.

*Enter LADY MACBETH*

10 DUNCAN. See, see, our honour'd hostess!  
The love that follows us sometime is our trouble,  
Which still we thank as love. Herein I teach you  
How you shall bid God 'ild us for your pains,  
And thank us for your trouble.

LADY MACBETH. All our service  
15 In every point twice done and then done double  
Were poor and single business to contend  
Against those honours deep and broad wherewith  
Your majesty loads our house: for those of old,  
And the late dignities heap'd up to them,  
We rest your hermits.

20 DUNCAN. Where 's the thane of Cawdor?  
We cours'd him at the heels, and had a purpose  
To be his purveyor: but he rides well,  
And his great love, sharp as his spur, hath holp him  
To his home before us. Fair and noble hostess,  
We are your guest to-night.

25 LADY MACBETH. Your servants ever  
Have theirs, themselves, and what is theirs, in compt,  
To make their audit at your highness' pleasure,  
Still to return your own.

DUNCAN. Give me your hand;  
Conduct me to mine host: we love him highly,  
30 And shall continue our graces towards him.  
By your leave, hostess.

[*Exeunt*]

## SCENE VII. MACBETH'S castle

*Hautboys and torches. Enter a Sewer, and divers Servants with dishes and service, over the stage. Then enter MACBETH*

- MACBETH. If it were done when 't is done, then 't were well  
It were done quickly: if th' assassination  
Could trammel up the consequence, and catch  
With his surcease success; that but this blow  
5 Might be the be-all and the end-all here,  
But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,  
We 'ld jump the life to come. But in these cases  
We still have judgment here, that we but teach  
Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return  
10 To plague th' inventor: this even-handed justice  
Commends th' ingredients of our poison'd chalice  
To our own lips. He 's here in double trust:  
First, as I am his kinsman and his subject,  
Strong both against the deed; then, as his host,  
15 Who should against his murderer shut the door,  
Not bear the knife myself. Besides, this Duncan  
Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been  
So clear in his great office, that his virtues  
Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongu'd, against  
20 The deep damnation of his taking-off;  
And pity, like a naked new-born babe  
Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubin, hors'd  
Upon the sightless couriers of the air,  
Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,  
25 That tears shall drown the wind. I have no spur  
To prick the sides of my intent, but only  
Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself  
And falls on th' other.

*Enter LADY MACBETH*

How now! what news?

- LADY MACBETH. He has almost supp'd: why have you left the  
29 chamber?

MACBETH. Hath he ask'd for me?

LADY MACBETH. Know you not he has?

MACBETH. We will proceed no further in this business:

He hath honour'd me of late; and I have bought

Golden opinions from all sorts of people,  
Which would be worn now in their newest gloss,  
Not cast aside so soon.

35 LADY MACBETH. Was the hope drunk  
Wherein you dress'd yourself? hath it slept since?  
And wakes it now, to look so green and pale  
At what it did so freely? From this time  
Such I account thy love. Art thou afeard  
40 To be the same in thine own act and valour  
As thou art in desire? Wouldst thou have that  
Which thou esteem'st the ornament of life,  
And live a coward in thine own esteem,  
Letting 'I dare not' wait upon 'I would,'  
Like the poor cat i' the adage?

45 MACBETH. Prithee, peace:

~~I dare do all that may become a man;  
Who dares do more is none.~~

LADY MACBETH. What beast was 't, then,  
That made you break this enterprise to me?  
When you durst do it, then you were a man;  
50 And, to be more than what you were, you would  
Be so much more the man. Nor time nor place  
Did then adhere, and yet you would make both:  
They have made themselves, and that their fitness now  
Does unmake you. I have given suck, and know  
55 How tender 't is to love the babe that milks me;  
I would, while it was smiling in my face,  
Have pluck'd my nipple from his boneless gums,  
And dash'd the brains out, had I so sworn as you  
Have done to this.

MACBETH. If we should fail?

LADY MACBETH. We fail!

60 But screw your courage to the sticking-place,  
And we 'll not fail. When Duncan is asleep—  
Whereto the rather shall his day's hard journey  
Soundly invite him—his two chamberlains  
Will I with wine and wassail so convince,  
65 That memory, the warder of the brain,  
Shall be a fume, and the receipt of reason  
A limbeck only: when in swinish sleep  
Their drenched natures lie as in a death,  
What cannot you and I perform upon

70 Th' unguarded Duncan? what not put upon  
His spongy officers, who shall bear the guilt  
Of our great quell?

MACBETH. Bring forth men-children only;  
For thy undaunted mettle should compose  
Nothing but males. Will it not be receiv'd,

75 When we have mark'd with blood those sleepy two  
Of his own chamber and us'd their very daggers,  
That they have done 't?

LADY MACBETH. Who dares receive it other,  
As we shall make our griefs and clamour roar  
Upon his death?

MACBETH. I am settled, and bend up  
80 Each corporal agent to this terrible feat.  
Away, and mock the time with fairest show;  
False face must hide what the false heart doth know.

[*Exeunt*]

ACT II

SCENE I. *Inverness. Court of MACBETH'S castle*

*Enter BANQUO, and FLEANCE with a torch before him*

BANQUO. How goes the night, boy?

FLEANCE. The moon is down; I have not heard the clock.

BANQUO. And she goes down at twelve.

FLEANCE. I take 't, 't is later, sir.

BANQUO. Hold, take my sword. There 's husbandry in heaven;

5 Their candles are all out. Take thee that too.  
A heavy summons lies like lead upon me,  
And yet I would not sleep. Merciful powers,  
Restrain in me the cursed thoughts that nature  
Gives way to in repose!

*Enter MACBETH, and a Servant with a torch*

Give me my sword.

10 Who 's there?

MACBETH. A friend.

BANQUO. What, sir, not yet at rest? The king 's a-bed:  
He hath been in unusual pleasure, and  
Sent forth great largess to your offices:

15 This diamond he greets your wife withal,

By the name of most kind hostess; and shut up  
In measureless content.

MACBETH. Being unprepar'd,  
Our will became the servant to defect;  
Which else should free have wrought.

BANQUO. All 's well.

20 I dreamt last night of the three weird sisters:  
To you they have show'd some truth.

MACBETH. I think not of them;  
Yet, when we can entreat an hour to serve,  
We would spend it in some words upon that business,  
If you would grant the time.

BANQUO. At your kind'st leisure.

MACBETH. If you shall cleave to my consent, when 't is,  
It shall make honour for you.

26 BANQUO. So I lose none  
In seeking to augment it, but still keep  
My bosom franchis'd, and allegiance clear,  
I shall be counsell'd.

MACBETH. Good repose the while!

30 BANQUO. Thanks, sir: the like to you!

[*Exeunt BANQUO and FLEANCE.*]

MACBETH. Go bid thy mistress, when my drink is ready,  
She strike upon the bell. Get thee to bed. [*Exit Servant*]  
Is this a dagger which I see before me,  
The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee.

35 I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.

Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible  
To feeling as to sight? or art thou but  
A dagger of the mind, a false creation,  
Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?

40 I see thee yet, in form as palpable  
As this which now I draw.

Thou marshall'st me the way that I was going;  
And such an instrument I was to use.

Mine eyes are made the fools o' the other senses,  
Or else worth all the rest: I see thee still;  
And on thy blade and dudgeon gouts of blood,  
Which was not so before. There 's no such thing:  
It is the bloody business which informs  
Thus to mine eyes. Now o'er the one half-world  
50 Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse

The curtain'd sleep; witchcraft celebrates  
Pale Hecate's offerings; and wither'd murder,  
Alarum'd by his sentinel, the wolf,  
Whose howl 's his watch, thus with his stealthy pace,  
55 With Tarquin's ravishing strides, towards his design  
Moves like a ghost. Thou sure and firm-set earth,  
Hear not my steps, which way they walk, for fear  
Thy very stones prate of my whereabouts,  
And take the present horror from the time,  
60 Which now snits with it. Whiles I threat, he lives:  
Words to the heat of deeds too cold breath gives.

[*A bell rings*]

I go, and it is done; the bell invites me.  
Hear it not Duncan; for it is a knell  
That summons thee to heaven or to hell.

[*Exit*]

SCENE II. *The same*

*Enter* LADY MACBETH

LADY MACBETH. That which hath made them drunk hath made me  
bold;

What hath quench'd them hath given me fire. Hark! Peace!  
It was the owl that shriek'd, the fatal bellman,  
Which gives the stern'st good-night. He is about it.  
5 The doors are open; and the surfeited grooms  
Do mock their charge with snores: I have drugg'd their possets,  
That death and ~~nature~~ <sup>life</sup> do contend about them,  
Whether they live or die.

*Enter* MACBETH. *Above, for a moment.*

MACBETH. Who 's there? what, ho!

LADY MACBETH. Alack, I am afraid they have awak'd,  
10 And 't is not done. Th' attempt and not the deed  
Confounds us. Hark! I laid their daggers ready;  
He could not miss 'em. Had he not resembled  
My father as he slept, I had done 't.

*Enter* MACBETH

My husband!

MACBETH. I have done the deed. Didst thou not hear a noise?

15 LADY MACBETH. I heard the owl scream and the crickets cry.  
Did not you speak?

MACBETH. When?

LADY MACBETH. Now.

MACBETH. As I descended?

LADY MACBETH. Ay.

MACBETH. Hark!

Who lies i' the second chamber?

19 LADY MACBETH. Donalbain.

MACBETH. This is a sorry sight. [*Looking on his hands*]

LADY MACBETH. A foolish thought, to say a sorry sight.

MACBETH. There 's one did laugh in 's sleep, and one cried  
'Murder!'

That they did wake each other: I stood and heard them:  
But they did say their prayers, and address'd them  
Again to sleep.

25 LADY MACBETH. There are two lodg'd together.

MACBETH. One cried 'God bless us!' and 'Amen' the other,  
As they had seen me with these hangman's hands:  
Listening their fear, I could not say 'Amen,'  
When they did say 'God bless us!'

30 LADY MACBETH. Consider it not so deeply.

MACBETH. But wherefore could not I pronounce 'Amen'?  
I had most need of blessing, and 'Amen'  
Stuck in my throat.

LADY MACBETH. These deeds must not be thought

34 After these ways: so, it will make us mad.

MACBETH. Methought I heard a voice cry 'Sleep no more!  
Macbeth does murder sleep,'—the innocent sleep,  
Sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleeve of care,  
The death of each day's life, sore labour's bath,  
Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,  
Chief nourisher in life's feast,—

40 LADY MACBETH. What do you mean?

MACBETH. Still it cried 'Sleep no more!' to all the house:  
'Glamis hath murder'd sleep, and therefore Cawdor  
Shall sleep no more; Macbeth shall sleep no more!'

LADY MACBETH. Who was it that thus cried? Why, worthy thane,

45 You do unbend your noble strength, to think  
So brainsickly of things. Go get some water,  
And wash this filthy witness from your hand.  
Why did you bring these daggers from the place?

They must lie there: go carry them, and smear  
The sleepy grooms with blood.

50 MACBETH. I 'll go no more:  
I am afraid to think what I have done;  
Look on 't again I dare not.

LADY MACBETH. Infirm of purpose!  
Give me the daggers: the sleeping and the dead  
Are but as pictures; 't is the eye of childhood  
55 That fears a painted devil. If he do bleed,  
I 'll gild the faces of the grooms withal;  
For it must seem their guilt. [*Exit. Knocking within*]

MACBETH. Whence is that knocking?

How is 't with me, when every noise appals me?  
What hands are here? ha! they pluck out mine eyes.  
60 Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood  
Clean from my hand? No; this my hand will rather  
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,  
Making the green one red.

*Re-enter LADY MACBETH*

LADY MACBETH. My hands are of your colour, but I shame  
65 To wear a heart so white. [*Knocking within*] I hear a knocking  
At the south entry: retire we to our chamber.  
A little water clears us of this deed:  
How easy is it, then! Your constancy  
Hath left you unattended. [*Knocking within*] Hark! more  
knocking.

70 Get on your night-gown, lest occasion call us,  
And show us to be watchers. Be not lost  
So poorly in your thoughts.

MACBETH. To know my deed, 't were best not know myself.  
[*Knocking within*]  
Wake Duncan with thy knocking! I would thou couldst!  
[*Exeunt*]

SCENE III. *The same*

*Enter a PORTER. Knocking within*

PORTER. Here 's a knocking indeed! If a man were porter of  
hell-gate, he should have old turning the key. [*Knocking*] Knock,  
knock, knock! Who 's there, i' the name of Beelzebub? Here 's a  
farmer, that hang'd himself on the expectation of plenty. Come in

time; have napkins enough about you; here you 'll sweat for 't.  
[*Knocking*] Knock, knock! Who 's there, in the other devil's name? Faith, here 's an equivocator that could swear in both the scales against either scale; who committed treason enough for God's sake, yet could not equivocate to heaven. O, come in, equivocator. [*Knocking*] Knock, knock, knock! Who 's there? Faith, here 's an English tailor come hither for stealing out of a French hose. Come in, tailor; here you may roast your goose. [*Knocking*] Knock, knock; never at quiet! What are you? But this place is too cold for hell. I 'll devil-porter it no further: I had thought to have let in some of all professions, that go the primrose way to the everlasting bonfire. [*Knocking*] Anon, anon! I pray you, remember the porter. [*Opens the gate*]

*Enter MACDUFF and LENNOX*

20 MACDUFF. Was it so late, friend, ere you went to bed,  
That you do lie so late?

PORTER. Faith, sir, we were carousing till the second cock.

MACDUFF. I believe drink gave thee the lie last night.

PORTER. That it did, sir; i' the very throat on me: but I requited him for his lie; and, I think, being too strong for him, though he  
27 took up my legs sometime, yet I made a shift to cast him.

*Enter MACBETH*

MACDUFF. Is thy master stirring?

Our knocking has awak'd him; here he comes.

LENNOX. Good morrow, noble sir.

MACBETH. Good morrow, both.

MACDUFF. Is the king stirring, worthy thane?

MACBETH. Not yet.

MACDUFF. He did command me to call timely on him:

I have almost slipp'd the hour.

MACBETH. I 'll bring you to him.

MACDUFF. I know this is a joyful trouble to you;

35 But yet 't is one.

MACBETH. The labour we delight in physics pain.

This is the door.

MACDUFF. I 'll make so bold to call,

For 't is my limited service.

[*Exit*]

LENNOX. Goes the king hence to-day?

MACBETH.

He does; — he did appoint so.

- 40 LENNOX. The night has been unruly: where we lay,  
Our chimneys were blown down; and, as they say,  
Lamentings heard i' the air, strange screams of death,  
And, prophesying with accents terrible  
Of dire combustion and confus'd events  
45 New hatch'd to th' woeful time, the obscure bird  
Clamour'd the livelong night: some say, the earth  
Was feverous and did shake.

MACBETH. 'T was a rough night.

LENNOX. My young remembrance cannot parallel  
A fellow to it.

*Re-enter MACDUFF*

MACDUFF. O horror, horror, horror! tongue nor heart  
Cannot conceive nor name thee!

- 51 MACBETH. } What 's the matter?  
LENNOX. }

MACDUFF. Confusion now hath made his masterpiece!  
Most sacrilegious murder hath broke ope  
The Lord's anointed temple, and stole thence  
The life o' the building.

- 55 MACBETH. What is 't you say? the life?

LENNOX. Mean you his majesty?

MACDUFF. Approach the chamber, and destroy your sight  
With a new Gorgon. Do not bid me speak;  
See, and then speak yourselves.

*[Exeunt MACBETH AND LENNOX]*

Awake, awake!

- 60 Ring the alarum-bell. Murder and treason!  
Banquo and Donalbain! Malcolm! awake!  
Shake off this downy sleep, death's counterfeit,  
And look on death itself! up, up, and see  
The great doom's image! Malcolm! Banquo!  
65 As from your graves rise up, and walk like sprites,  
To countenance this horror. Ring the bell. *[Bell rings]*

*Enter LADY MACBETH*

LADY MACBETH. What 's the business,  
That such a hideous trumpet calls to parley  
The sleepers of the house? speak, speak!

MACDUFF.

O gentle lady,

70 'T is not for you to hear what I can speak:  
The repetition, in a woman's ear,  
Would murder as it fell.

*Enter BANQUO*

O Banquo, Banquo,  
Our royal master's murder'd!

LADY MACBETH. Woe, alas!

What, in our house?

BANQUO. Too cruel anywhere.

75 Dear Duff, I prithee, contradict thyself,  
And say it is not so.

*Re-enter MACBETH and LENNOX, with ROSS*

MACBETH. Had I but died an hour before this chance,  
I had liv'd a blessed time; for, from this instant,  
There's nothing serious in mortality:

80 All is but toys; renown and grace is dead;  
The wine of life is drawn, and the mere lees  
Is left this vault to brag of.

*Enter MALCOLM and DONALBAIN*

DONALBAIN. What is amiss?

MACBETH. You are, and do not know 't:  
The spring, the head, the fountain of your blood

85 Is stopp'd, the very source of it is stopp'd.

MACDUFF. Your royal father's murder'd.

MALCOLM. O! by whom?

LENNOX. Those of his chamber, as it seem'd, had done 't:

Their hands and faces were all badg'd with blood;

So were their daggers, which unwip'd we found

90 Upon their pillows:

They star'd, and were distracted; no man's life

Was to be trusted with them.

MACBETH. O, yet I do repent me of my fury,  
That I did kill them.

MACDUFF. Wherefore did you so?

95 MACBETH. Who can be wise, amaz'd, temperate and furious,  
Loyal and neutral, in a moment? No man:  
The expedition of my violent love

Outrun the pauser, reason. Here lay Duncan,  
His silver skin lac'd with his golden blood;  
100 And his gash'd stabs look'd like a breach in nature  
For ruin's wasteful entrance; there, the murderers,  
Steep'd in the colours of their trade, their daggers  
Unmannerly breech'd with gore: who could refrain,  
That had a heart to love, and in that heart  
Courage to make 's love known?

105 LADY MACBETH. Help me hence, ho!

MACDUFF. Look to the lady.

MALCOLM. [Aside to DONALBAIN] Why do we  
hold our tongues,

That most may claim this argument for ours?

DONALBAIN. [Aside to MALCOLM] What should be spoken here,  
where our fate,

Hid in an auger-hole, may rush, and seize us?

110 Let 's away.

Our tears are not yet brew'd.

MALCOLM. [Aside to DONALBAIN] Nor our strong sorrow  
Upon the foot of motion

BANQUO.

Look to the lady;

[LADY MACBETH is carried out]

And when we have our naked frailties hid,

That suffer in exposure, let us meet

115 And question this most bloody piece of work,  
To know it further. Fears and scruples shake us:  
In the great hand of God I stand, and thence  
Against the undivulg'd pretence I fight  
Of treasonous malice.

MACDUFF.

And so do I.

ALL.

So all.

120 MACBETH. Let ' briefly put on manly readiness,  
And meet i' the hall together.

ALL.

Well contented.

[Exeunt all but MALCOLM and DONALBAIN]

MALCOLM. What will you do? Let 's not consort with them:

To show an unfelt sorrow is an office

Which the false man does easy. I 'll to England.

125 DONALBAIN. To Ireland, I; our separated fortune  
Shall keep us both the safer: where we are,  
There 's daggers in men's smiles: the near in blood,  
The nearer bloody.

MALCOLM. This murderous shaft that 's shot

Hath not yet lighted; and our safest way  
 130 Is to avoid the aim. Therefore, to horse;  
 And let us not be dainty of leave-taking,  
 But shift away: there 's warrant in that theft  
 Which steals itself, when there 's no mercy left. [Exeunt]

SCENE IV. *Outside MACBETH'S castle*

*Enter ROSS and an OLD MAN*

OLD MAN. Threescore-and-ten I can remember well:  
 Within the volume of which time I have seen  
 Hours dreadful and things strange; but this sore night  
 Hath trifi'd former knowings.

ROSS. Ah, good father,

5 Thou see'st the heavens, as troubl'd with man's act,  
 Threatens his bloody stage: by th' clock 't is day,  
 And yet dark night strangles the travelling lamp.  
 Is 't night's predominance, or the day's shame  
 That darkness does the face of earth entomb,  
 When living light should kiss it?

10 OLD MAN. 'T is unnatural,  
 Even like the deed that 's done. On Tuesday last,  
 A falcon, tow'ring in her pride of place,  
 Was by a mousing owl hawk'd at and kill'd.

ROSS. And Duncan's horses — a thing most strange and certain —  
 15 Beauteous and swift, the minions of their race,  
 Turn'd wild in nature, broke their stalls, flung out,  
 Contending 'gainst obedience, as they would make  
 War with mankind.

OLD MAN. 'T is said they eat each other.

ROSS. They did so, to th' amazement of mine eyes,  
 20 That look'd upon 't.

*Enter MACDUFF*

Here comes the good Macduff.

How goes the world, sir, now?

MACDUFF. Why, see you not?

ROSS. Is 't known who did this more than bloody deed?

MACDUFF. Those that Macbeth hath slain.

ROSS.

Alas, the day!

What good could they pretend?

MACDUFF.

They were suborn'd:

25 Malcolm and Donalbain, the King's two sons,  
Are stol'n away and fled; which puts upon them  
Suspicion of the deed.

ROSS.

'Gainst nature still!

Thriftless ambition, that will ravin up

Thine own life's means! Then 't is most like

30 The sovereignty will fall upon Macbeth.

MACDUFF. He is already nam'd; and gone to Scone.

To be invested.

ROSS.

Where is Duncan's body?

MACDUFF. Carried to Colmekill,

The sacred storehouse of his predecessors,

35 And guardian of their bones.

ROSS.

Will you to Scone?

MACDUFF. No, cousin, I 'll to Fife.

ROSS.

Well, I will thither.

MACDUFF. Well, may you see things well done there,—adieu!—

Lest our old robes sit easier than our new!

ROSS. Farewell, father.

OLD MAN. God's benison go with you; and with those

41 That would make good of bad, and friends of foes!

[*Exeunt*]

## ACT III

SCENE I. *Forres. The palace**Enter BANQUO*

BANQUO. Thou hast it now: king, Cawdor, Glamis, all,

As the weird women promis'd, and, I fear,Thou play'dst most foully for 't: yet it was saidIt should not stand in thy posterity,

5 But that myself should be the root and father

Of many kings. If there come truth from them,

As upon thee, Macbeth, their speeches shine,

Why, by the verities on thee made good,

May they not be my oracles as well,

10 And set me up in hope? But hush! no more.

*Sennet sounded. Enter MACBETH, as king; LADY MACBETH, as queen; LENNOX, ROSS, Lords, Ladies, and Attendants*

MACBETH. Here 's our chief guest.

LADY MACBETH. If he had been forgotten,  
It had been as a gap in our great feast,  
And all-thing unbecoming.

MACBETH. To-night we hold a solemn supper, sir,

15 And I 'll request your presence.

BANQUO. Let your highness  
Command upon me; to the which my duties  
Are with a most indissoluble tie  
For ever knit.

MACBETH. Ride you this afternoon?

BANQUO. Ay, my good lord.

MACBETH. We should have else desir'd your good advice,

21 Which still hath been both grave and prosperous,  
In this day's council; but we 'll take to-morrow.  
Is 't far you ride?

BANQUO. As far, my lord, as will fill up the time

25 'Twixt this and supper: go not my horse the better,  
I must become a borrower of the night  
For a dark hour or twain.

MACBETH. Fail not our feast.

BANQUO. My lord, I will not.

MACBETH. We hear, our bloody cousins are bestow'd

30 In England and in Ireland, not confessing  
Their cruel parricide, filling their hearers  
With strange invention: but of that to-morrow,  
When therewithal we shall have cause of state  
Craving us jointly. Hie you to horse; adieu,

35 Till you return at night. Goes Fleance with you?

BANQUO. Ay, my good lord: our time does call upon 's.

MACBETH. I wish your horses swift and sure of foot;  
And so I do commend you to their backs.  
Farewell.

[Exit BANQUO]

40 Let every man be master of his time  
Till seven at night; to make society  
The sweeter welcome, we will keep ourself  
Till supper-time alone: while then, God be with you!

[Exeunt all but MACBETH and an ATTENDANT]

Sirrah, a word with you: attend those men

45 Our pleasure?

ATTENDANT. They are, my lord, without the palace-gate.

MACBETH. Bring them before us. [Exit ATTENDANT]

To be thus is nothing,

But to be safely thus. Our fears in Banquo

Stick deep; and in his royalty of nature

50 Reigns that which would be fear'd. 'T is much he dares;

And, to that dauntless temper of his mind,

He hath a wisdom that doth guide his valour

To act in safety. There is none but he

Whose being I do fear; and, under him,

55 My Genius is rebuk'd, as, it is said,

Mark Antony's was by Cæsar. He chid the sisters,

When first they put the name of king upon me,

And bade them speak to him; then, prophet-like,

They hail'd him father to a line of kings:

60 Upon my head they plac'd a fruitless crown,

And put a barren sceptre in my gripe,

Thence to be wrench'd with an unlineal hand,

No son of mine succeeding. If 't be so,

For Banquo's issue have I fil'd my mind;

65 For them the gracious Duncan have I murder'd;

Put rancours in the vessel of my peace

Only for them; and mine eternal jewel

Given to the common enemy of man,

To make them kings, the seed of Banquo kings!

70 Rather than so, come, fate, into the list,

And champion me to th' utterance!—Who 's there?

*Re-enter ATTENDANT, with two MURDERERS*

Now go to th' door, and stay there till we call.—

[Exit ATTENDANT]

Was it not yesterday we spoke together?

1 MURDERER. It was, so please your highness.

MACBETH.

Well then, now

75 Have you consider'd of my speeches? Know

That it was he, in the times past, which held you

So under fortune; which you thought had been

Our innocent self: this I made good to you

In our last conference, pass'd in probation with you,

81       How you were borne in hand, how cross'd, the instruments,  
Who wrought with them, and all things else that might  
To half a soul and to a notion craz'd  
Say, ' Thus did Banquo.'

1 MURDERER.                               You made it known to us.

MACBETH. I did so, and went further, which is now  
85       Our point of second meeting. Do you find  
Your patience so predominant in your nature  
That you can let this go? Are you so gospell'd,  
To pray for this good man and for his issue,  
Whose heavy hand hath bow'd you to the grave  
And beggar'd yours for ever?

90 1 MURDERER.                               We are men, my liege.

MACBETH. Ay, in the catalogue ye go for men;  
As hounds and greyhounds, mongrels, spaniels, curs,  
Shoughs, water-rugs, and demi-wolves, are clept  
All by the name of dogs: the valued file  
95       Distinguishes the swift, the slow, the subtle,  
The housekeeper, the hunter, every one  
According to the gift which bounteous nature  
Hath in him clos'd; whereby he does receive  
Particular addition, from the bill  
100       That writes them all alike; and so of men.  
Now, if you have a station in the file,  
Not i' the worse rank of manhood, say 't;  
And I will put that business in your bosoms,  
Whose execution takes your enemy off,  
105       Grapples you to the heart and love of us,  
Who wear our health but sickly in his life,  
Which in his death were perfect.

2 MURDERER.                               I am one, my liege,  
Whom the vile blows and buffets of the world  
Hath so incens'd, that I am reckless what  
I do to spite the world.

110 1 MURDERER.                               And I another  
So weary with disasters, tugg'd with fortune,  
That I would set my life on any chance,  
To mend it, or be rid on 't.

MACBETH.                                       Both of you  
Know Banquo was your enemy.

BOTH MURDERERS.                               True, my lord.

MACBETH. So is he mine; and in such bloody distance,  
116 That every minute of his being thrusts  
Against my near'st of life; and though I could  
With barefac'd power sweep him from my sight  
And bid my will avouch it, yet I must not,  
120 For certain friends that are both his and mine,  
Whose loves I may not drop, but wail his fall  
Who I myself struck down; and thence it is,  
That I to your assistance do make love,  
Masking the business from the common eye  
For sundry weighty reasons.

125 2 MURDERER. We shall, my lord,  
Perform what you command us.

1 MURDERER. Though our lives —

MACBETH. Your spirits shine through you. Within this hour at most  
I will advise you where to plant yourselves;  
Acquaint you with the perfect spy o' the time,  
130 The moment on 't; for 't must be done to-night,  
And something from the palace; always thought  
That I require a clearness: and with him —  
To leave no rubs nor botches in the work —  
Fleance his son, that keeps him company,  
135 Whose absence is no less material to me  
Than is his father's, must embrace the fate  
Of that dark hour. Resolve yourselves apart;  
I 'll come to you anon.

BOTH MURDERERS. We are resolv'd, my lord.

MACBETH. I 'll call upon you straight: abide within.

[*Exeunt* MURDERERS]

140 It is concluded: Banquo, thy soul's flight,  
If it find heaven, must find it out to-night. [Exit]

## SCENE II. *The palace*

*Enter* LADY MACBETH and a SERVANT

LADY MACBETH. Is Banquo gone from court?

SERVANT. Ay, madam, but returns again to-night.

LADY MACBETH. Say to the king, I would attend his leisure  
For a few words.

SERVANT. Madam, I will. [Exit]

LADY MACBETH. Nought 's had, all 's spent,

- 5     Where our desire is got without content:  
       *'T is safer to be that which we destroy*  
       *Than by destruction dwell in doubtful joy.*

*Enter MACBETH*

- How now, my lord! why do you keep alone,  
 Of sorriest fancies your companions making;  
 10    Using those thoughts which should indeed have died  
       With them they think on? Things without all remedy  
       Should be without regard: what's done is done.
- MACBETH. We have scotch'd the snake, not kill'd it:  
 She'll close and be herself, whilst our poor malice  
 15    Remains in danger of her former tooth.  
       But let the frame of things disjoint, both the worlds suffer,  
       Ere we will eat our meal in fear, and sleep  
       In the affliction of these terrible dreams  
       That shake us nightly: better be with the dead,  
 20    Whom we, to gain our peace, have sent to peace,  
       Than on the torture of the mind to lie  
       In restless ecstasy. Duncan is in his grave;  
       After life's fitful fever he sleeps well;  
       Treason has done his worst: nor steel, nor poison,  
 25    Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing,  
       Can touch him further.

LADY MACBETH.                    Come on;  
       Gentle my lord, sleek o'er your rugged looks;  
       Be bright and jovial among your guests to-night.

- MACBETH. So shall I, love; and so, I pray, be you: .  
 30    Let your remembrance apply to Banquo;  
       Present him eminence, both with eye and tongue:  
       Unsafe the while, that we  
       Must lave our honours in these flattering streams,  
       And make our faces vizards to our hearts,  
       Disguising what they are.

- 35 LADY MACBETH.                    You must leave this.

MACBETH. O, full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife!  
       Thou know'st that Banquo and his Fleance lives.

LADY MACBETH. But in them nature's copy's not eterne.

- MACBETH. There's comfort yet; they are assailable;  
 40    Then be thou jocund: ere the bat hath flown  
       His cloister'd flight; ere to black Hecate's summons

The shard-borne beetle with his drowsy hums  
Hath rung night's yawning peal, there shall be done  
A deed of dreadful note.

LADY MACBETH. What 's to be done?

MACBETH. Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck,  
46 Till thou applaud the deed. Come, seeling night,  
Scarf up the tender eye of pitiful day,  
And with thy bloody and invisible hand  
Cancel and tear to pieces that great bond  
50 Which keeps me pale! Light thickens, and the crow  
Makes wing to th' rocky wood:  
Good things of day begin to droop and drowse,  
Whiles night's black agents to their preys do rouse.  
Thou marvell'st at my words, but hold thee still;  
55 Things bad begun make strong themselves by ill.  
So, prithee, go with me.

[*Exeunt*]

SCENE III. *A park near the palace*

*Enter three MURDERERS*

1 MURDERER. But who did bid thee join with us?

3 MURDERER. Macbeth.

2 MURDERER. He needs not our mistrust; since he delivers  
Our offices, and what we have to do,  
To the direction just.

1 MURDERER. Then stand with us.

5 The west yet glimmers with some streaks of day:  
Now spurs the lated traveller apace  
To gain the timely inn; and near approaches  
The subject of our watch.

3 MURDERER. Hark! I hear horses.

BANQUO. [*Within*] Give us a light there, ho!

2 MURDERER. Then 't is he: the rest

10 That are within the note of expectation  
Already are i' the court.

1 MURDERER. His horses go about.

3 MURDERER. Almost a mile: but he does usually,  
So all men do, from hence to th' palace gate

15 Make it their walk.

*Enter BANQUO, and FLEANCE with a torch*

2 MURDERER. A light, a light!

3 MURDERER. 'T is he.

1 MURDERER. Stand to 't.

BANQUO. It will be rain to-night.

1 MURDERER. Let it come down.

[*They set upon BANQUO*]

BANQUO. O, treachery! Fly, good Fleance, fly, fly, fly!

Thou mayst revenge. O slave! [*Dies. FLEANCE escapes*]

3 MURDERER. Who did strike out the light?

1 MURDERER. Was 't not the way?

3 MURDERER. There 's but one down; the son is fled.

2 MURDERER. We have lost

21 Best half of our affair.

1 MURDERER. Well, let 's away, and say how much is done.

[*Exeunt*]

SCENE IV. *Hall in the palace*

*A banquet prepared. Enter MACBETH, LADY MACBETH, ROSS, LENNOX, LORDS, and Attendants*

MACBETH. You know your own degrees; sit down: at first  
And last the hearty welcome.

LORDS. Thanks to your majesty.

MACBETH. Ourself will mingle with society,  
And play the humble host.

5 Our hostess keeps her state, but in best time  
We will require her welcome.

LADY MACBETH. Pronounce it for me, sir, to all our friends,  
For my heart speaks they are welcome.

[*FIRST MURDERER appears at the door*]

MACBETH. See, they encounter thee with their hearts' thanks.

10 Both sides are even: here I 'll sit i' the midst.

Be large in mirth; anon we 'll drink a measure

The table round.—[*Goes to the door*] There's blood upon thy  
face.

MURDERER. 'T is Banquo's then.

MACBETH. 'T is better thee without than he within.

15 Is he dispatch'd?

MURDERER. My lord, his throat is cut; that I did for him.

MACBETH. Thou art the best o' the cut-throats; yet he's good  
That did the like for Fleance: if thou didst it,  
Thou art the nonpareil.

MURDERER. Most royal sir,

20 Fleance is 'scap'd.

MACBETH. Then comes my fit again: I had else been perfect,  
Whole as the marble, founded as the rock;  
As broad and general as the casing air:  
But now I am cabin'd, cribb'd, confin'd, bound in

25 To saucy doubts and fears. But Banquo's safe?

MURDERER. Ay, my good lord; safe in a ditch he bides,  
With twenty trenched gashes on his head,  
The least a death to nature.

MACBETH. Thanks for that.

There the grown serpent lies; the worm that 's fled  
30 Hath nature that in time will venom breed,  
No teeth for th' present. Get thee gone: to-morrow  
We 'll hear 't, ourself, again. [Exit MURDERER]

LADY MACBETH. My royal lord,

You do not give the cheer: the feast is sold  
That is not often vouch'd, while 't is a-making,  
35 'T is given with welcome: to feed were best at home;  
From thence the sauce to meat is ceremony;  
Meeting were bare without it.

*Enter the Ghost of BANQUO, and sits in MACBETH'S place*

MACBETH. Sweet remembrancer!  
Now, good digestion wait on appetite,  
And health on both!

LENNOX. May 't please your highness sit.

MACBETH. Here had we now our country's honour roof'd,  
41 Were the grac'd person of our Banquo present;  
Who may I rather challenge for unkindness  
Than pity for mischance.

ROSS. His absence, sir,  
Lays blame upon his promise. Please 't your highness  
45 To grace us with your royal company.

MACBETH. The table 's full!

LENNOX. Here is a place reserv'd, sir.

MACBETH. Where?

LENNOX. Here, my good lord. What is 't that moves your highness?

MACBETH. Which of you have done this?

LORDS.

What, my good lord?

50 MACBETH. Thou canst not say I did it: never shake

Thy gory locks at me.

ROSS. Gentlemen, rise; his highness is not well.

LADY MACBETH. Sit, worthy friends: my lord is often thus,

And hath been from his youth: pray you, keep seat;

55 The fit is momentary; upon a thought

He will again be well: if much you note him,

You shall offend him, and extend his passion:

Feed, and regard him not. [*Aside to MACBETH*] Are you a man?

MACBETH. Ay, and a bold one, that dare look on that

Which might appal the devil.

60 LADY MACBETH. [*Aside to MACBETH*] O proper stuff!

This is the very painting of your fear:

This is the air-drawn dagger which, you said,

Led you to Duncan. O, these flaws and starts,

Impostors to true fear, would well become

65 A woman's story at a winter's fire,

Authoriz'd by her grandam. Shame itself!

Why do you make such faces? When all's done,

You look but on a stool.

MACBETH. Prithee, see there! behold! look! lo! how say you?

70 Why, what care I? If thou canst nod, speak too.

If charnel-houses and our graves must send

Those that we bury back, our monuments

Shall be the maws of kites.

[*Ghost vanishes*]

LADY MACBETH. [*Aside to MACBETH*] What, quite unmann'd in folly?

MACBETH. If I stand here, I saw him!

LADY MACBETH. [*Aside to MACBETH*] Fie, for shame!

75 MACBETH. Blood hath been shed ere now, i' the olden time,

Ere humane statute purg'd the gentle weal;

Ay, and since too, murders have been perform'd

Too terrible for the ear. The time has been,

That, when the brains were out, the man would die,

80 And there an end; but now they rise again,

With twenty mortal murders on their crowns,

And push us from our stools: this is more strange

Than such a murder is.

LADY MACBETH. My worthy lord,

Your noble friends do lack you,

MACBETH.

I do forget.

- 85 Do not muse at me, my most worthy friends;  
I have a strange infirmity, which is nothing  
To those that know me. Come, love and health to all;  
Then I 'll sit down. Give me some wine, fill full.

*Re-enter the Ghost*

- I drink to th' general joy o' the whole table,  
90 And to our dear friend Banquo, whom we miss;  
Would he were here! to all and him we thirst,  
And all to all.

LORDS. Our duties, and the pledge.

MACBETH. Avaunt! and quit my sight! let the earth hide thee!

- Thy bones are marrowless, thy blood is cold;  
95 Thou hast no speculation in those eyes  
Which thou dost glare with!

LADY MACBETH. Think of this, good peers,  
But as a thing of custom: 't is no other;  
Only it spoils the pleasure of the time.

MACBETH. What man dare, I dare:

- 100 Approach thou like the rugged Russian bear,  
The arm'd rhinoceros, or the Hyrcan tiger;  
Take any shape but that, and my firm nerves  
Shall never tremble: or be alive again,  
And dare me to the desert with thy sword;  
105 If trembling I inhabit then, protest me  
The baby of a girl. Hence, horrible shadow!  
Unreal mockery, hence! [Ghost vanishes]

Why, so: being gone,

I am a man again. Pray you, sit still.

LADY MACBETH. You have displac'd the mirth, broke the good  
meeting,

- 110 With most admir'd disorder.

MACBETH.

Can such things be,

- And overcome us like a summer's cloud,  
Without our special wonder? You make me strange  
Even to the disposition that I owe,  
When now I think you can behold such sights,  
115 And keep the natural ruby of your cheeks,  
When mine is blanch'd with fear.

ROSS.

What sights, my lord?

LADY MACBETH. I pray you, speak not; he grows worse and worse;  
 Question enrages him. At once, good night:  
 Stand not upon the order of your going,  
 But go at once.

120 LENNOX. Good night; and better health  
 Attend his majesty!

LADY MACBETH. A kind good night to all!  
*[Exeunt all but MACBETH and LADY MACBETH]*

MACBETH. It will have blood they say: Blood will have blood:  
 Stones have been known to move and trees to speak;  
 Augures and understood relations have

125 By magot-pies and choughs and rooks brought forth  
 The secret'st man of blood. What is the night?

LADY MACBETH. Almost at odds with morning, which is which.

MACBETH. How say'st thou, that Macduff denies his person  
 At our great bidding?

LADY MACBETH. Did you send to him, sir?

130 MACBETH. I hear it by the way, but I will send:

There's not a one of them but in his house

I keep a servant fee'd. I will to-morrow,

And betimes I will, to the weird sisters:

✓ More shall they speak; for now I am bent to know,

135 By the worst means, the worst. For mine own good

All causes shall give way: I am in blood

Stepp'd in so far that, should I wade no more,

Returning were as tedious as go o'er:

Strange things I have in head that will to hand,

140 Which must be acted ere they may be scann'd.

LADY MACBETH. You lack the season of all natures, sleep.

MACBETH. Come, we'll to sleep. My strange and self-abuse

Is the initiate fear that wants hard use:

We are yet but young in deed.

*[Exeunt]*

SCENE V. A heath

Thunder. Enter the three WITCHES, meeting HECATE

1 WITCH. Why, how now, Hecate! you look angrily.

HECATE. Have I not reason, beldams as you are,  
 Saucy and overbold? How did you dare  
 To trade and traffic with Macbeth

5 In riddles and affairs of death;

And I, the mistress of your charms,  
The close contriver of all harms,  
Was never call'd to bear my part,  
Or show the glory of our art?  
10 And, which is worse, all you have done  
Hath been but for a wayward son,  
Spiteful and wrathful; who, as others do,  
Loves for his own ends, not for you.  
But make amends now: get you gone,  
15 And at the pit of Acheron  
Meet me i' the morning: ~~thither~~ he  
Will come to know his destiny:  
Your vessels and your spells provide,  
Your charms, and every thing beside.  
20 I am for th' air; this night I'll spend  
Unto a dismal and a fatal end:  
Great business must be wrought ere noon:  
Upon the corner of the moon  
There hangs a vaporous drop profound;  
25 I'll catch it ere it come to ground:  
And that distill'd by magic sleights  
Shall raise such artificial sprites  
As by the strength of their illusion  
Shall draw him on to his confusion:  
30 He shall spurn fate, scorn death, and bear  
His hopes 'bove wisdom, grace, and fear;  
And you all know security *mental feeling of safety*  
Is mortals' chiefest enemy.

[*Music, and a Song*]

Hark! I am call'd; my little spirit, see,  
Sits in a foggy cloud, and stays for me. [*Exit*]

[*Sing within: 'Come away, come away,' etc.*]

1 WITCH. Come, let's make haste; she'll soon be back again.

[*Exeunt*]

SCENE VI. Forres. The palace

Enter LENNOX and another LORD

LENNOX. My former speeches have but hit your thoughts,  
Which can interpret farther: only, I say  
Things have been strangely borne. The gracious Duncan  
Was pitied of Macbeth: marry, he was dead:

*beginning  
not against  
Mac*

- 5 And the right-valiant Banquo walk'd too late;  
Whom, you may say, if 't please you, Fleance kill'd,  
For Fleance fled: men must not walk too late.  
Who cannot want the thought, how monstrous  
It was for Malcolm and for Donalbain  
10 To kill their gracious father? damned fact!  
How did grieve Macbeth! did he not straight,  
In pious rage, the two delinquents tear,  
That were the slaves of drink and thralls of sleep?  
Was not that nobly done? Ay, and wisely too;  
15 For 't would have anger'd any heart alive  
To hear the men deny 't. So that, I say,  
He has borne all things well: and I do think  
That, had he Duncan's sons under his key—  
As, and 't please heaven, he shall not,—they should find  
20 What 't were to kill a father; so should Fleance.  
But, peace! for from broad words, and 'cause he fail'd  
His presence at the tyrant's feast, I hear,  
Macduff lives in disgrace. Sir, can you tell  
Where he bestows himself?

LORD.

The son of Duncan,

- 25 From whom this tyrant holds the due of birth,  
Lives in the English court; and is receiv'd  
Of the most pious Edward with such grace  
That the malevolence of fortune nothing  
Takes from his high respect. Thither Macduff  
30 Is gone to pray the holy king, upon his aid  
To wake Northumberland and warlike Siward;  
That by the help of these, with Him above  
To ratify the work, we may again  
Give to our tables meat, sleep to our nights;  
35 Free from our feasts and banquets bloody knives,  
Do faithful homage and receive free honours;  
All which we pine for now: and this report  
Hath so exasperate the king, that he  
Prepares for some attempt of war.

*Edward the Confessor**- of Hamlet  
free your good  
ty from reason*

LENNOX.

Sent he to Macduff?

- 40 LORD. He did: and with an absolute 'Sir, not I,'  
The cloudy messenger turns me his back,  
And hums, as who should say, 'You 'll rue the time  
That clogs me with this answer.'

LENNOX.

And that well might

- Advise him to a caution, to hold what distance  
45 His wisdom can provide. Some holy angel  
Fly to the court of England and unfold  
His message ere he come; that a swift blessing  
May soon return to this our suffering country  
Under a hand accurs'd!

LORD.

I 'll send my prayers with him.

[*Exeunt*]

## ACT IV

SCENE I. *A cavern. In the middle, a boiling cauldron. Thunder.**Enter the three WITCHES*

- 1 WITCH. Thrice the brinded cat hath mew'd.  
2 WITCH. Thrice, and once the hedge-pig whin'd.  
3 WITCH. Harpier cries; 't is time, 't is time.  
1 WITCH. Round about the cauldron go;  
5 In the poison'd entrails throw.  
Toad, that under cold stone  
Days and nights has thirty-one  
Swelter'd venom sleeping got,  
Boil thou first i' the charmed pot.  
10 ALL. Double, double toil and trouble;  
Fire burn and cauldron bubble.  
2 WITCH. Fillet of a fenny snake,  
In the cauldron boil and bake;  
Eye of newt and toe of frog,  
15 Wool of bat and tongue of dog,  
Adder's fork and blind-worm's sting,  
Lizard's leg and howlet's wing,  
For a charm of powerful trouble,  
Like a hell-broth boil and bubble.  
20 ALL. Double, double toil and trouble;  
Fire burn and cauldron bubble.  
3 WITCH. Scale of dragon, tooth of wolf,  
Witches' mummy, maw and gulf  
Of the ravin'd salt-sea shark;  
25 Root of hemlock digg'd i' the dark,  
Liver of blaspheming Jew,  
Gall of goat, and slips of yew  
Sliver'd in the moon's eclipse,

- 30           Nose of Turk and Tartar's lips,  
Finger of birth-strangled babe  
Ditch-deliver'd by a drab,  
Make the gruel thick and slab:  
Add thereto a tiger's chaudron,  
For th' ingredients of our cauldron.
- 35 ALL.       Double, double toil and trouble;  
Fire burn and cauldron bubble.
- 2 WITCH.     Cool it with a baboon's blood,  
Then the charm is firm and good.

*Enter HECATE to the other three WITCHES*

- HECATE.     O, well done! I commend your pains;  
40           And every one shall share i' th' gains:  
And now about the cauldron sing,  
Like elves and fairies in a ring,  
Enchanting all that you put in.

*[Music, and a Song, 'Black spirits,' etc.]*

*[Exit HECATE]*

- 2 WITCH.     By the pricking of my thumbs,  
45           Something wicked this way comes:  
Open, locks,  
Whoever knocks!

*Enter MACBETH*

MACBETH.    How now, you secret, black, and midnight hags!  
What is 't you do?

ALL.           A deed without a name.

- 50 MACBETH.   I conjure you, by that which you profess,  
Howe'er you come to know it, answer me:  
Though you untie the winds and let them fight  
Against the churches; though the yesty waves  
Confound and swallow navigation up;  
55           Though bladed corn be lodg'd, and trees blown down;  
Though castles topple on their warders' heads;  
Though palaces and pyramids do slope  
Their heads to their foundations; though the treasure  
Of nature's germens tumble all together,  
60           Even till destruction sicken; answer me  
To what I ask you.

1 WITCH.           Speak.

2 WITCH.           Demand.

3 WITCH.

We'll answer.

1 WITCH. Say, if thou 'dst rather hear it from our mouths,  
Or from our masters? ✓

MACBETH.

Call 'em, let me see 'em.

1 WITCH. Pour in sow's blood, that hath eaten  
Her nine farrow; grease that 's sweaten  
From the murderer's gibbet throw  
Into the flame.

65

ALL.

Come, high or low;

Thyself and office deftly show!

*Thunder. First APPARITION, an armed Head*

MACBETH. Tell me, thou unknown power, —

1 WITCH

He knows thy thought:

70

Hear his speech, but say thou nought.

1 APPARITION. Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth! beware Macduff;  
Beware the thane of Fife. — Dismiss me: enough.

[Descends]

MACBETH. Whate'er thou art, for thy good caution, thanks;

Thou hast harp'd my fear aright: but one word more, —

1 WITCH. He will not be commanded: here 's another,

76

More potent than the first.

*Thunder. Second APPARITION, a bloody Child*

2 APPARITION. Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth!

MACBETH. Had I three ears, I 'd hear thee.

2 APPARITION. Be bloody, bold, and resolute; laugh to scorn

80 The power of man, for none of woman born

Shall harm Macbeth.

[Descends]

MACBETH. Then live, Macduff: what need I fear of thee?

But yet I 'll make assurance double sure,

And take a bond of fate: thou shalt not live;

85 That I may tell pale-hearted fear it lies,

And sleep in spite of thunder.

*Thunder. Third APPARITION, a Child crowned, with a tree in his hand*

What is this,

That rises like the issue of a king,

And wears upon his baby brow the round

*Macbeth leads the secret of the witches.*

And top of sovereignty?

ALL. Listen, but speak not to 't.

3 APPARITION. Be lion-mettl'd, proud; and take no care

91 Who chafes, who frets, or where conspirers are:

Macbeth shall never vanquish'd be until

Great Birnam wood to high Dunsinane hill

Shall come against him.

[Descends]

MACBETH. That will never be:

95 Who can impress the forest; bid the tree

Unfix his earth-bound root? Sweet bodements! good!

Rebellion's head, rise never till the wood

Of Birnam rise, and our high-plac'd Macbeth

Shall live the lease of nature, pay his breath

100 To time and mortal custom. Yet my heart

Throbs to know one thing: tell me, if your art

Can tell so much: shall Banquo's issue ever

Reign in this kingdom?

ALL. Seek to know no more.

MACBETH. I will be satisfied: deny me this,

105 (And an eternal curse fall on you! Let me know:

Why sinks that cauldron? and what noise is this?

[Hautboys]

1 WITCH. Show!

2 WITCH. Show!

3 WITCH. Show!

110 ALL. Show his eyes, and grieve his heart;

Come like shadows, so depart!

*A show of eight Kings, the last with a glass in his hand; BANQUO'S*

*Ghost following*

MACBETH. Thou art too like the spirit of Banquo; down!

Thy crown does sear mine eyeballs. And thy hair,

Thou other gold-bound brow, is like the first:

115 A third is like the former. Filthy hags!

Why do you show me this? A fourth! Start, eyes!

What, will the line stretch out to th' crack of doom?

Another yet! A seventh! I'll see no more:

And yet the eighth appears, who bears a glass

120 Which shows me many more; and some I see

That twofold balls and treble sceptres carry:

Horrible sight! Now I see 't is true;

For the blood-bolter'd Banquo smiles upon me,

And points at them for him. [*Apparitions vanish.*]

What, is this so?

125 1 WITCH. Ay, sir, all this is so; but why  
 Stands Macbeth thus amazedly?  
 Come, sisters, cheer we up his sprites,  
 And show the best of our delights:  
 I 'll charm the air to give a sound,  
 130 While you perform your antic round;  
 That this great king may kindly say  
 Our duties did his welcome pay.

[*Music. The WITCHES dance, and vanish*]

MACBETH. Where are they? Gone? Let this pernicious hour  
 Stand aye accursed in the calendar!

135 Come in, without there!

*Enter LENNOX*

LENNOX. What 's your grace's will?

MACBETH. Saw you the weird sisters?

LENNOX. No, my lord.

MACBETH. Came they not by you?

LENNOX. No, indeed, my lord.

MACBETH. Infected be the air whereon they ride,  
 And damn'd all those that trust them! I did hear

140 The galloping of horse: who was 't came by?

LENNOX. 'T is two or three my lord, that bring you word  
 Macduff is fled to England.

MACBETH. Fled to England!

LENNOX. Ay, my good lord.

MACBETH. Time, thou anticipat'st my dread exploits:

145 The flighty purpose never is o'ertook  
 Unless the deed go with it: from this moment  
The very firstlings of my heart shall be  
The firstlings of my hand. And even now,  
 To crown my thoughts with acts, be it thought and done:  
 150 The castle of Macduff I will surprise;  
 Seize upon Fife; give to the edge o' the sword  
 His wife, his babes, and all unfortunate souls  
 That trace him in his line. No boasting like a fool;  
 This deed I 'll do before this purpose cool:  
 155 But no more sights! Where are these gentlemen?  
 Come, bring me where they are.

[*Exeunt*]

SCENE II. *Fife. MACDUFF'S castle**Enter LADY MACDUFF, her SON, and ROSS*

LADY MACDUFF. What had he done, to make him fly the land?

ROSS. You must have patience, madam.

LADY MACDUFF. He had none!

( His flight was madness: when our actions do not,  
Our fears do make us traitors.

ROSS. You know not

5 Whether it was his wisdom or his fear.

LADY MACDUFF. Wisdom! to leave his wife, to leave his babes,

His mansion, and his titles, in a place

From whence himself does fly! He loves us not;

He wants the natural touch: for the poor wren,

10 The most diminutive of birds, will fight,

Her young ones in her nest, against the owl.

All is the fear and nothing is the love;

As little is the wisdom, where the flight

So runs against all reason.

ROSS. My dearest coz,

15 I pray you, school yourself: but, for your husband,

He is noble, wise, judicious, and best knows

The fits o' the season. I dare not speak much further:

But cruel are the times, when we are traitors

And do not know ourselves; when we hold rumour20 From what we fear, yet know not what we fear,

But float upon a wild and violent sea

Each way and move. I take my leave of you;

Shall not be long but I 'll be here again.

Things at the worst will cease, or else climb upward

25 To what they were before. My pretty cousin,

Blessing upon you!

LADY MACDUFF. Father'd he is, and yet he 's fatherless.

ROSS. I am so much a fool, should I stay longer;

It would be my disgrace and your discomfort:

I take my leave at once.

[Exit]

30 LADY MACDUFF. Sirrah, your father 's dead:

And what will you do now? How will you live?

SON. As birds do, mother.

LADY MACDUFF. What, with worms and flies?

SON. With what I get, I mean; and so do they.

- LADY MACDUFF. Poor bird! thou 'dst never fear the net nor lime,  
35 The pitfall nor the gin.  
SON. Why should I, mother? Poor birds they are not set for.  
My father is not dead, for all your saying.  
LADY MACDUFF. Yes, he is dead: how wilt thou do for a father?  
SON. Nay, how will you do for a husband?  
LADY MACDUFF. Why, I can buy me twenty at any market.  
41 SON. Then you 'll buy 'em to sell again.  
LADY MACDUFF. Thou speak'st with all thy wit; and yet i' faith,  
With wit enough for thee.  
SON. Was my father a traitor, mother?  
45 LADY MACDUFF. Ay, that he was.  
SON. What is a traitor?  
LADY MACDUFF. Why, one that swears and lies.  
SON. And be all traitors that do so?  
LADY MACDUFF. Every one that does so is a traitor, and must be  
50 hang'd.  
SON. And must they all be hang'd that swear and lie?  
LADY MACDUFF. Every one.  
SON. Who must hang them?  
54 LADY MACDUFF. Why, the honest men.  
SON. Then the liars and swearers are fools; for there are liars and  
swearers enow to beat the honest men and hang up them.  
LADY MACDUFF. Now, God help thee, poor monkey! But how wilt  
59 thou do for a father?  
SON. If he were dead, you 'd weep for him: if you would not, it  
were a good sign that I should quickly have a new father.  
LADY MACDUFF. Poor prattler, how thou talk'st!

*Enter a MESSENGER*

- MESSENGER. Bless you, fair dame! I am not to you known,  
65 Though in your state of honour I am perfect.  
I doubt some danger does approach you nearly:  
If you will take a homely man's advice,  
Be not found here; hence, with your little ones.  
To fright you thus, methinks I am too savage;  
70 To do worse to you were fell cruelty,  
Which is too nigh your person. Heaven preserve you!  
I dare abide no longer.

[*Exit*]

- LADY MACDUFF. Whither should I fly?  
I have done no harm. But I remember now

I am in this earthly world; where to do harm  
 75 Is often laudable, to do good sometime  
 Accounted dangerous folly: why then, alas,  
 Do I put up that womanly defence,  
 To say I have done no harm? — What are these faces?

*Enter MURDERERS*

1 MURDERER. Where is your husband?  
 80 LADY MACDUFF. I hope, in no place so unsanctified  
 Where such as thou mayst find him.  
 1 MURDERER. He 's a traitor.  
 SON. Thou liest, thou shag-ear'd villain!  
 1 MURDERER. [*Stabbing him*] What, you egg!  
 Young fry of treachery!  
 SON. He has kill'd me, mother:  
 Run away, I pray you! [*Dies*]  
 [*Exit LADY MACDUFF, crying ' Murder! '*]  
*Exeunt MURDERERS, following her*

SCENE III. *England. Before the King's palace*

*Enter MALCOLM and MACDUFF*

MALCOLM. Let us seek out some desolate shade, and there  
 Weep our sad bosoms empty.  
 MACDUFF. Let us rather  
 Hold fast the mortal sword, and, like good men,  
 Bestride our down-fall'n birthdom. Each new morn  
 5 New widows howl, new orphans cry, new sorrows  
 Strike heaven on the face, that it resounds  
 As if it felt with Scotland, and yell'd out  
 Like syllable of dolour.  
 MALCOLM. What I believe, I 'll wail;  
 What know, believe; and what I can redress,  
 10 As I shall find the time to friend, I will.  
 What you have spoke, it may be so perchance.  
This tyrant, whose sole name blisters our tongues,  
Was once thought honest: you have lov'd him well,  
 He hath not touch'd you yet. I am young; but something  
 15 You may discern of him through me, and wisdom  
 To offer up a weak, poor, innocent lamb  
 T' appease an angry god.

MACDUFF. I am not treacherous.

MALCOLM.

But Macbeth is.

A good and virtuous nature may recoil  
20 In an imperial charge. But I shall crave your pardon;  
That which you are, my thoughts cannot transpose:  
Angels are bright still, though the brightest fell:  
Though all things foul would wear the brows of grace,  
Yet grace must still look so.

MACDUFF.

I have lost my hopes.

25 MALCOLM. Perchance even there where I did find my doubts.

Why in that rawness left you wife and child,  
Those precious motives, those strong knots of love,  
Without leave-taking? I pray you,  
Let not my jealousies be your dishonours,  
30 But mine own safeties: you may be rightly just,  
Whatever I shall think.

MACDUFF.

Bleed, bleed, poor country!

Great tyranny, lay thou thy basis sure,  
For goodness dare not check thee; wear thou thy wrongs;  
The title is affeer'd! Fare thee well, lord:  
35 I would not be the villain that thou think'st  
For the whole space that 's in the tyrant's grasp,  
And the rich East to boot.

MALCOLM.

Be not offended:

I speak not as in absolute fear of you.  
I think our country sinks beneath the yoke;  
40 It weeps, it bleeds; and each new day a gash  
Is added to her wounds: I think withal  
There would be hands uplifted in my right;  
And here from gracious England have I offer  
Of goodly thousands: but, for all this,  
45 When I shall tread upon the tyrant's head,  
Or wear it on my sword, yet my poor country  
Shall have more vices than it had before;  
More suffer, and more sundry ways than ever,  
By him that shall succeed.

MACDUFF.

What should he be?

MALCOLM. It is myself I mean; in whom I know  
All the particulars of vice so grafted,  
That when they shall be open'd, black Macbeth  
Will seem as pure as snow; and the poor state

Esteem him as a lamb, being compar'd

55 With my confineless harms.

MACDUFF.

Not in the legions

Of horrid hell can come a devil more damn'd

In evils to top Macbeth.

MALCOLM.

I grant him bloody,

Luxurious, avaricious, false, deceitful,

Sudden, malicious, smacking of every sin

60 That has a name: but there's no bottom, none,

In my voluptuousness; your wives, your daughters,

Your matrons, and your maids, could not fill up

The cistern of my lust, and my desire

All continent impediments would o'erbear,

65 That did oppose my will. Better Macbeth

Than such an one to reign.

MACDUFF.

Boundless intemperance

In nature is a tyranny; it hath been

Th' untimely emptying of the happy throne,

And fall of many kings. But fear not yet

70 To take upon you what is yours: you may

Convey your pleasures in a spacious plenty,

And yet seem cold, the time you may so hoodwink:

We have willing dames enough; there cannot be

That vulture in you, to devour so many

75 As will to greatness dedicate themselves,

Finding it so inclin'd.

MALCOLM.

With this there grows,

In my ill-compos'd affection such

A stanchless avarice that, were I king,

I should cut off the nobles for their lands,

Desire his jewels and this other's house:

And my more-having would be as a sauce

To make me hunger more, that I should forge

Quarrels unjust against the good and loyal,

Destroying them for wealth.

MACDUFF.

This avarice

85 Sticks deeper, grows with more pernicious root

Than summer-seeming lust, and it hath been

The sword of our slain kings: yet do not fear;

Scotland hath foisons to fill up your will

Of your mere own: all these are portable,

90 With other graces weigh'd.

MALCOLM. But I have none: the king-becoming graces,  
As justice, verity, temperance, stableness,  
Bounty, perseverance, mercy, lowliness,  
Devotion, patience, courage, fortitude,  
95 I have no relish of them; but abound  
In the division of each several crime,  
Acting in many ways. Nay, had I power, I should  
Pour the sweet milk of concord into hell,  
Uproar the universal peace, confound  
100 All unity on earth.

MACDUFF. O Scotland, Scotland!

MALCOLM. If such a one be fit to govern, speak:  
I am as I have spoken.

MACDUFF. Fit to govern!

No, not to live. O nation miserable,  
With an untitled tyrant bloody-scepter'd,  
105 When shalt thou see thy wholesome days again,  
Since that the truest issue of thy throne  
By his own interdiction stands accurs'd,  
And does blaspheme his breed? Thy royal father  
Was a most sainted king: the queen that bore thee,  
110 Oftener upon her knees than on her feet,  
Died every day she liv'd. Fare thee well!  
These evils thou repeat'st upon thyself  
Hath banish'd me from Scotland. O my breast,  
Thy hope ends here!

MALCOLM. Macduff, this noble passion,  
115 Child of integrity, hath from my soul  
Wip'd the black scruples, reconcil'd my thoughts  
To thy good truth and honour. Devilish Macbeth  
By many of these trains hath sought to win me  
Into his power; and modest wisdom plucks me  
120 From over-credulous haste: but God above  
Deal between thee and me! for even now  
I put myself to thy direction, and  
Unspeak mine own detraction; here abjure  
The taints and blames I laid upon myself,  
125 For strangers to my nature. I am yet  
Unknown to woman, never was forsworn,  
Scarcely have coveted what was mine own,  
At no time broke my faith, would not betray  
The devil to his fellow, and delight

- 130 No less in truth than life: my first false speaking  
 Was this upon myself. What I am truly,  
 Is thine and my poor country's to command;  
 Whither, indeed, before thy here-approach,  
 Old Siward, with ten thousand warlike men,  
 135 Already at a point, was setting forth:  
 Now we 'll together; and the chance of goodness  
 Be like our warranted quarrel! Why are you silent?  
 MACDUFF. Such welcome and unwelcome things at once  
 'T is hard to reconcile.

*Enter a DOCTOR*

- 140 MALCOLM. Well; more anon.—Comes the king forth, I pray you?

DOCTOR. Ay, sir; there are a crew of wretched souls

That stay his cure: their malady convinces

The great assay of art; but at his touch, *from that*  
 Such sanctity hath heaven given his hand, *from scruple*

- 145 They presently amend.

MALCOLM. I thank you, doctor. [*Exit DOCTOR*]

MACDUFF. What 's the disease he means?

MALCOLM. 'T is call'd the evil:

A most miraculous work in this good king;

Which often, since my here-remain in England,

I have seen him do. How he solicits heaven,

- 150 Himself best knows: but strangely-visited people,

All swoln and ulcerous, pitiful to the eye,

The mere despair of surgery, he cures,

Hanging a golden stamp about their necks,

Put on with holy prayers: and 't is spoken,

- 155 To the succeeding royalty he leaves

The healing benediction. With this strange virtue,

He hath a heavenly gift of prophecy,

And sundry blessings hang about his throne,

That speak him full of grace.

*Enter Ross*

MACDUFF. See, who comes here?

- 160 MALCOLM. My countryman; but yet I know him not.

MACDUFF. My ever-gentle cousin, welcome hither.

MALCOLM. I know him now. Good God, betimes remove

The means that makes us strangers!

ROSS.

Sir, amen.

MACDUFF. Stands Scotland where it did?

ROSS.

Alas, poor country,

165 Almost afraid to know itself! It cannot  
Be call'd our mother, but our grave: where nothing,  
But who knows nothing, is once seen to smile;  
Where sighs and groans and shrieks that rend the air,  
Are made, not mark'd; where violent sorrow seems  
170 A modern ecstasy: the dead man's knell  
Is there scarce ask'd for who; and good men's lives  
Expire before the flowers in their caps,  
Dying or ere they sicken.

MACDUFF.

O, relation

Too nice, and yet too true!

MALCOLM.

What's the newest grief?

175 ROSS. That of an hour's age doth hiss the speaker;  
Each minute teems a new one.

MACDUFF.

How does my wife?

ROSS. Why, well.

MACDUFF.

And all my children?

ROSS.

Well too.

MACDUFF. The tyrant has not batter'd at their peace?

ROSS. No; they were well at peace when I did leave 'em.

MACDUFF. Be not a niggard of your speech: how goes 't?

181 ROSS. When I came hither to transport the tidings  
Which I have heavily borne, there ran a rumour  
Of many worthy fellows that were out;  
Which was to my belief witness'd the rather,  
185 For that I saw the tyrant's power a-foot:  
Now is the time of help; your eye in Scotland  
Would create soldiers, make our women fight,  
To doff their dire distresses.

MALCOLM.

Be 't their comfort

We are coming thither: gracious England hath  
190 Lent us good Siward and ten thousand men;  
An older and a better soldier none  
That Christendom gives out.

ROSS.

Would I could answer

This comfort with the like! But I have words  
That would be howl'd out in the desert air,  
195 Where hearing should not latch them.

MACDUFF.

What concern they?

The general cause? or is it a fee-grief  
Due to some single breast?

ROSS.

No mind that's honest

But in it shares some woe; though the main part  
Pertains to you alone.

MACDUFF.

If it be mine,

200 Keep it not from me, quickly let me have it.

ROSS. Let not your ears despise my tongue for ever,  
Which shall possess them with the heaviest sound  
That ever they yet heard.

MACDUFF.

Hum! I guess at it.

ROSS. Your castle is surpris'd; your wife and babes

205 Savagely slaughter'd: to relate the manner,  
Were, on the quarry of these murder'd deer,  
To add the death of you.

MALCOLM.

Merciful heaven!

What, man! ne'er pull your hat upon your brows;  
Give sorrow words: the grief that does not speak

210 Whispers the o'er-fraught heart and bids it break.

MACDUFF. My children too?

ROSS.

Wife, children, servants, all

That could be found.

MACDUFF.

And I must be from thence!

My wife kill'd too?

ROSS.

I have said.

MALCOLM.

Be comforted:

Let's make us medicines of our great revenge,

215 To cure this deadly grief.

MACDUFF. He has no children.—All my pretty ones?

Did you say all? O hell-kite! All?

What, all my pretty chickens and their dam  
At one fell swoop?

220 MALCOLM. Dispute it like a man.

MACDUFF.

I shall do so;

But I must also feel it as a man:

I cannot but remember such things were,

That were most precious to me. Did heaven look on,

And would not take their part? Sinful Macduff,

225 They were all struck for thee! naught that I am,

Not for their own demerits, but for mine,

Fell slaughter on their souls. Heaven rest them now!

MALCOLM. Be this the whetstone of your sword: let grief  
Convert to anger; blunt not the heart, enrage it.

230 MACDUFF. O, I could play the woman with mine eyes,  
And braggart with my tongue! But, gentle heavens,  
Cut short all intermission; front to front  
Bring thou this fiend of Scotland and myself;  
Within my sword's length set him; if he 'scape,  
235 Heaven forgive him too!

MALCOLM. This tune goes manly.

Come, go we to the king; our power is ready;

Our lack is nothing but our leave. Macbeth

Is ripe for shaking, and the powers above

Put on their instruments. Receive what cheer you may:

The night is long that never finds the day. [Exeunt]

# ACT V

## SCENE I. Dunsinane. Ante-room in the castle

Enter a DOCTOR of Physic and a WAITING-GENTLEWOMAN

DOCTOR. I have two nights watch'd with you, but can perceive no truth in your report. When was it she last walk'd?

GENTLEWOMAN. Since his majesty went into the field, I have seen her rise from her bed, throw her night-gown upon her, unlock her closet, take forth paper, fold it, write upon 't, read it, afterwards seal it, and again return to bed; yet all this while in a most  
7 fast sleep.

DOCTOR. A great perturbation in nature, to receive at once the benefit of sleep, and do the effects of watching! In this slumbry agitation, besides her walking and other actual perform-  
12 ances, what at any time, have you heard her say?

GENTLEWOMAN. That, sir, which I will not report after her.

DOCTOR. You may to me; and 't is most meet you should.

GENTLEWOMAN. Neither to you nor any one; having no wit-  
16 ness to confirm my speech.

Enter LADY MACBETH, with a taper

Lo you, here she comes! This is her very guise; and, upon my life, fast asleep. Observe her; stand close.

19 DOCTOR. How came she by that light?

GENTLEWOMAN. Why, it stood by her: she has light by her continually; 't is her command.

DOCTOR. You see, her eyes are open.

GENTLEWOMAN. Ay, but their sense are shut.

DOCTOR. What is it she does now? Look, how she rubs her  
25 hands.

GENTLEWOMAN. It is an accustom'd action with her, to seem thus washing her hands; I have known her continue in this a quarter of an hour.

29 LADY MACBETH. Yet here 's a spot.

DOCTOR. Hark! she speaks: I will set down what comes from her, to satisfy my remembrance the more strongly.

LADY MACBETH. Out, damned spot! out, I say! — One: two: why, then 't is time to do 't. — Hell is murky! — Fie, my lord, fie! a soldier, and afeard? What need we fear who knows it, when none  
37 old man to have had so much blood in him?

DOCTOR. Do you mark that?

LADY MACBETH. The thane of Fife had a wife; where is she now? — What, will these hands ne'er be clean? — No more o' that,  
42 my lord, no more o' that: you mar all with this starting.

DOCTOR. Go to, go to; you have known what you should not.

GENTLEWOMAN. She has spoke what she should not, I am sure of that: heaven knows what she has known.

LADY MACBETH. Here 's the smell of the blood still: all the  
49 perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. Oh, oh, oh!

DOCTOR. What a sigh is there! The heart is sorely charg'd.

GENTLEWOMAN. I would not have such a heart in my bosom for the dignity of the whole body.

DOCTOR. Well, well, well, —

55 GENTLEWOMAN. Pray God it be, sir.

DOCTOR. This disease is beyond my practice: yet I have known those which have walk'd in their sleep who have died holily  
58 in their beds.

LADY MACBETH. Wash your hands; put on your night-gown; look not so pale. I tell you yet again, Banquo 's buried; he cannot come out on 's grave.

62 DOCTOR. Even so?

LADY MACBETH. To bed, to bed; there 's knocking at the gate: come, come, come, come, give me your hand: what 's done cannot be undone: to bed, to bed, to bed.

[Exit]

DOCTOR. Will she go now to bed?

67 GENTLEWOMAN. Directly.

DOCTOR. Foul whisperings are abroad: unnatural deeds

Do breed unnatural troubles: infected minds

70 To their deaf pillows will discharge their secrets:

More needs she the divine than the physician.

God, God forgive us all! Look after her;

Remove from her the means of all annoyance,

And still keep eyes upon her. So, good night:

75 My mind she has mated, and amaz'd my sight:

I think, but dare not speak.

GENTLEWOMAN.

Good night, good doctor.

[*Exeunt*]

SCENE II. *The country near Dunsinane*

*Drum and colours. Enter MENTEITH, CAITHNESS, ANGUS, LENNOX, and Soldiers*

MENTEITH. The English power is near, led on by Malcolm,

His uncle Siward, and the good Macduff:

Revenge burn in them; for their dear causes

Would to the bleeding and the grim alarm

Excite the mortified man.

5 ANGUS. Near Birnam wood

Shall we well meet them; that way are they coming.

CAITHNESS. Who knows if Donalbain be with his brother?

LENNOX. For certain, sir, he is not: I have a file

Of all the gentry: there is Siward's son,

10 And many unrough youths, that even now

Protest their first of manhood.

MENTEITH. What does the tyrant?

CAITHNESS. Great Dunsinane he strongly fortifies:

Some say he's mad; others, that lesser hate him,

Do call it valiant fury: but, for certain,

15 He cannot buckle his distemper'd cause

Within the belt of rule.

ANGUS. Now does he feel

His secret murders sticking on his hands;

Now minutely revolts upbraid his faith-breach;

Those he commands move only in command,

20 Nothing in love: now does he feel his title

Hang loose about him, like a giant's robe

Upon a dwarfish thief.

MENTEITH.

Who then shall blame

His pester'd senses to recoil and start,  
When all that is within him does condemn

25     Itself for being there?

CAITHNESS.

Well, march we on,

To give obedience where 't is truly ow'd:

Meet we the medicine of the sickly weal;

And with him pour we in our country's purge

Each drop of us.

LENNOX.

Or so much as it needs

30     To dew the sovereign flower and drown the weeds.

Make we our march towards Birnam.     [*Exeunt, marching*]

SCENE III. *Dunsinane. A room in the castle*

*Enter MACBETH, the DOCTOR, and Attendants*

MACBETH. Bring me no more reports; let them fly all:

Till Birnam wood remove to Dunsinane

I cannot taint with fear. What 's the boy Malcolm?

Was he not born of woman? The spirits that know

5     All mortal consequences have pronounc'd me thus:

'Fear not, Macbeth; no man that 's born of woman

Shall e'er have power upon thee.' Then fly, false thanes,

And mingle with the English epicures:

The mind I sway by and the heart I bear

10     Shall never sag with doubt nor shake with fear.

*Enter a SERVANT*

The devil damn thee black, thou cream-fac'd loon!

Where got'st thou that goose look?

SERVANT. There is ten thousand —

MACBETH.

Geese, villain?

SERVANT.

Soldiers, sir.

MACBETH. Go prick thy face, and over-red thy fear,

15     Thou lily-liver'd boy. What soldiers, patch?

Death of thy soul! those linen cheeks of thine

Are counsellors to fear. What soldiers, whey-face?

SERVANT. The English force, so please you.

MACBETH. Take thy face hence.

[*Exit SERVANT*]

Seyton! — I am sick at heart,

*medicine = doctor*  
*that*

*Doctor*  
*Enter*  
*than*

20 When I behold — Seyton, I say! — This push  
Will cheer me ever, or disseat me now.  
I have liv'd long enough: my way of life  
Is fall'n into the sear, the yellow leaf;  
And that which should accompany old age,  
25 As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,  
I must not look to have; but, in their stead,  
Curses, not loud but deep, mouth-honour, breath,  
Which the poor heart would fain deny, and dare not.  
Seyton!

*Macbeth  
of ambition  
to gain  
and to lose  
it*

*Enter* SEYTON

SEYTON. What 's your gracious pleasure?

MACBETH.

What news more?

SEYTON. All is confirm'd, my lord, which was reported.

32 MACBETH. I 'll fight, till from my bones my flesh be hack'd.  
Give me my armour.

SEYTON.

'T is not needed yet.

MACBETH. I 'll put it on.

35 Send out moe horses, skirr the country round;  
Hang those that talk of fear. Give me mine armour.  
How does your patient, doctor?

*Enter*

DOCTOR.

Not so sick, my lord,

As she is troubled with thick-coming fancies,

That keep her from her rest.

MACBETH.

Cure her of that.

40 ~~Canst thou not minister to a mind diseas'd,~~  
~~Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,~~  
~~Raze out the written troubles of the brain,~~  
~~And with some sweet oblivious antidote~~  
~~Cleanse the stuff'd bosom of that perilous stuff~~  
45 Which weighs upon the heart?

DOCTOR.

Therein the patient

Must minister to himself.

MACBETH. Throw physics to the dogs, I 'll none of it.

Come, put mine armour on; give me my staff.

Seyton, send out. Doctor, the thanes fly from me.

50 Come, sir, dispatch. If thou couldst, doctor, cast  
The water of my land, find her disease,  
And purge it to a sound and pristine health,  
I would applaud thee to the very echo,

That should applaud again. Pull 't off, I say.

- 55 What rhubarb, senna, or what purgative drug,  
Would scour these English hence? Hear'st thou of them?

DOCTOR. Ay, my good lord; your royal preparation  
Makes us hear something.

MACBETH. Bring it after me.

I will not be afraid of death and bane,

- 60 Till Birnam forest come to Dunsinane.

DOCTOR. [*Aside*] Were I from Dunsinane away and clear,  
Profit again should hardly draw me here. [*Exeunt*]

*Practical doctor. Comes only for the profit.*

#### SCENE IV. Country near Birnam wood

*Drum and colours. Enter MALCOLM, old SIWARD and his Son, MACDUFF, MENTEITH, CAITHNESS, ANGUS, LENNOX, ROSS, and SOLDIERS, marching*

MALCOLM. Cousins, I hope the days are near at hand  
That chambers will be safe.

MENTEITH. We doubt it nothing.

SIWARD. What wood is this before us?

MENTEITH. The wood of Birnam.

MALCOLM. Let every soldier hew him down a bough,

- 5 And bear 't before him: thereby shall we shadow  
The numbers of our host, and make discovery  
Err in report of us.

SOLDIERS. It shall be done.

SIWARD. We learn no other but the confident tyrant  
Keeps still in Dunsinane, and will endure

- 10 Our sitting down before 't.

MALCOLM. 'T is his main hope:

For, where there is advantage to be given,  
Both more and less have given him the revolt,  
And none serve with him but constrained things,  
Whose hearts are absent too.

MACDUFF. Let our just censures

- 15 Attend the true event, and put we on  
Industrious soldiership.

SIWARD. The time approaches

That will with due decision make us know  
What we shall say we have and what we owe.

- Thoughts speculative their unsure hopes relate,  
 20 But certain issue strokes must arbitrate;  
 Towards which advance the war. [*Exeunt, marching*]

SCENE V. *Dunsinane. The castle*

*Enter MACBETH, SEYTON, and Soldiers, with drum and colours*

- MACBETH. Hang out our banners on the outward walls;  
 The cry is still, 'They come.' Our castle's strength  
 Will laugh a siege to scorn; here let them lie  
 Till famine and the ague eat them up.  
 5 Were they not forc'd with those that should be ours,  
 We might have met them dareful, beard to beard,  
 And beat them backward home. [*A cry of women within*]  
 What is that noise?  
 SEYTON. It is the cry of women, my good lord. [*Exit*]  
 MACBETH. I have almost forgot the taste of fears:  
 10 The time has been, my senses would have cool'd  
 To hear a night-shriek, and my fell of hair  
 Would at a dismal treatise rouse and stir  
 As life were in 't: I have supp'd full with horrors;  
 Direness, familiar to my slaughterous thoughts,  
 15 Cannot once start me.

*Re-enter SEYTON*

Wherefore was that cry?

- SEYTON. The queen, my lord, is dead.  
 MACBETH. She should have died hereafter;  
 There would have been a time for such a word.  
 To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,  
 20 Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,  
 To the last syllable of recorded time;  
 And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
 The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle! — *tragic*  
 Life 's but a walking shadow; a poor player *distraction*  
 25 That struts and frets his hour upon the stage *worrying ab*  
 And then is heard no more. It is a tale *in time*  
 Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
 Signifying nothing.

*Enter a MESSENGER*

Thou com'st to use thy tongue; thy story quickly.

30 MESSENGER. Gracious my lord,  
I should report that which I say I saw,  
But know not how to do 't.

MACBETH. Well, say, sir.

MESSENGER. As I did stand my watch upon the hill,  
I look'd toward Birnam, and anon, methought,

35 The wood began to move.

MACBETH. Liar and slave!

MESSENGER. Let me endure your wrath, if 't be not so:  
Within this three mile may you see it coming;  
I say, a moving grove.

MACBETH. If thou speak'st false,

Upon the next tree shall thou hang alive,  
40 Till famine cling thee: if thy speech be sooth,  
I care not if thou dost for me as much.  
I pull in resolution, and begin  
To doubt th' equivocation of the fiend  
That lies like truth: ' Fear not, till Birnam wood  
45 Do come to Dunsinane'; and now a wood  
Comes toward Dunsinane. Arm, arm, and out!  
If this which he avouches does appear,  
There is nor flying hence nor tarrying here.  
I 'gin to be a-weary of the sun,  
50 And wish th' estate o' the world were now undone.  
Ring the alarum-bell! Blow, wind! come, wrack!  
At least we 'll die with harness on our back. [Exeunt]

SCENE VI. *Dunsinane. Before the castle*

*Drum and colours. Enter MALCOLM, old SIWARD, MACDUFF, and  
their Army, with boughs*

MALCOLM. Now near enough; your leavy screens throw down,  
And show like those you are. You, worthy uncle,  
Shall, with my cousin, your right noble son,  
Lead our first battle: worthy Macduff and we  
5 Shall take upon 's what else remains to do,  
According to our order.

SIWARD. Fare you well.  
Do we but find the tyrant's power to-night,

Let us be beaten, if we cannot fight.

- 9 MACDUFF. Make all our trumpets speak; give them all breath,  
Those clamorous harbingers of blood and death. [Exeunt]  
[Alarums continued]

SCENE VII. *Another part of the field*

*Enter MACBETH*

MACBETH. They have tied me to a stake; I cannot fly,  
But, bear-like, I must fight the course. What 's he  
That was not born of woman? Such a one  
Am I to fear, or none.

*Enter young SIWARD*

YOUNG SIWARD. What is thy name?

MACBETH. Thou 'lt be afraid to hear it.

- 6 YOUNG SIWARD. No; though thou call 'st thyself a hotter name  
Than any is in hell.

MACBETH. My name 's Macbeth.

YOUNG SIWARD. The devil himself could not pronounce a title  
More hateful to mine ear.

MACBETH. No, nor more fearful.

- 10 YOUNG SIWARD. Thou liest, abhorred tyrant; with my sword  
I'll prove the lie thou speak'st.

[*They fight, and young SIWARD is slain*]

MACBETH. Thou wast born of woman.

But swords I smile at, weapons laugh to scorn, *Macbeth grows*  
Brandish'd by man that 's of a woman born. [Exit] *evn.*

*Alarums. Enter MACDUFF*

MACDUFF. That way the noise is. Tyrant, show thy face!

- 15 If thou be'st slain, and with no stroke of mine,  
My wife and children's ghosts will haunt me still.  
I cannot strike at wretched kerns, whose arms  
Are hir'd to bear their staves: either thou, Macbeth,  
Or else my sword, with an unbatter'd edge,  
20 I sheathe again undeeded. There thou shouldst be;  
By this great clatter, one of greatest note  
Seems bruted. Let me find him, fortune!  
And more I beg not.

[Exit, Alarums]

*Enter MALCOLM and old SIWARD*

SIWARD. This way, my lord. The castle's gently render'd:

25     The tyrant's people on both sides do fight;  
        The noble thanes do bravely in the war;  
        The day almost itself professes yours,  
        And little is to do.

MALCOLM.                     We have met with foes.

29     That strike beside us.

SIWARD.                     Enter, sir, the castle.

[*Exeunt. Alarum*]

SCENE VIII. *Another part of the field*

*Enter MACBETH*

MACBETH. Why should I play the Roman fool, and die  
        On mine own sword? whiles I see lives, the gashes  
        Do better upon them.

*Enter MACDUFF*

MACDUFF.                     Turn, hell-hound, turn!

MACBETH. Of all men else I have avoided thee:

5     But get thee back; my soul is too much charg'd  
        With blood of thine already.

MACDUFF.                     I have no words,  
        My voice is in my sword; thou bloodier villain  
        Than terms can give thee out! [They fight]

MACBETH.                     Thou lovest labour:

       As easy mayst thou the intrenchant air  
 10     With thy keen sword impress as make me bleed:  
        Let fall thy blade on vulnerable crests;  
        I bear a charmed life, which must not yield  
        To one of woman born.

MACDUFF.                     Despair thy charm;  
        And let the angel whom thou still hast serv'd

15     Tell thee, Macduff was from his mother's womb  
        Untimely ripp'd.

MACBETH. Accurs'd be that tongue that tells me so,  
        For it hath cow'd my better part of man!  
        And be these juggling fiends no more believ'd,  
 20     That palter with us in a double sense;

*Macbeth  
 Loves his  
 Confidant*

That keep the word of promise to our ear,  
And break it to our hope. I'll not fight with thee.

MACDUFF. Then yield thee, coward,  
And live to be the show and gaze o' the time:  
25 We'll have thee, as our rarer monsters are,  
Painted upon a pole, and underwrit,  
'Here may you see the tyrant.'

MACBETH. I will not yield, .  
To kiss the ground before young Malcolm's feet,  
And to be baited with the rabble's curse.  
30 Though Birnam wood be come to Dunsinane,  
And thou oppos'd, being of no woman born,  
Yet I will try the last: before my body  
I throw my warlike shield: lay on, Macduff;  
And damn'd be him that first cries, 'Hold, enough!'

[*Exeunt, fighting. Alarums*]

*Retreat. Flourish. Enter with drum and colours, MALCOLM, old  
SIWARD, ROSS, the other Thanes, and Soldiers*

MALCOLM. I would the friends we miss were safe arriv'd.

36 SIWARD. Some must go off; and yet, by these I see,  
So great a day as this is cheaply bought.

MALCOLM. Macduff is missing, and your noble son.

ROSS. Your son, my lord, has paid a soldier's debt:  
40 He only liv'd but till he was a man;  
The which no sooner had his prowess confirm'd  
In the unshrinking station where he fought,  
But like a man he died.

SIWARD. Then he is dead?

ROSS. Ay, and brought off the field: your cause of sorrow  
45 Must not be measur'd by his worth, for then  
It hath no end.

SIWARD. Had he his hurts before?

ROSS. Ay, on the front.

SIWARD. Why then, God's soldier be he!

Had I as many sons as I have hairs,  
I would not wish them to a fairer death:

50 And so his knell is knoll'd.

MALCOLM. He's worth more sorrow,

And that I'll spend for him.

SIWARD. He's worth no more;

They say he parted well, and paid his score;  
And so God be with him! Here comes newer comfort.

*Re-enter MACDUFF, with MACBETH'S head*

MACDUFF. Hail, king! for so thou art: behold, where stands

55 Th' usurper 's curs'd head: the time is free.  
I see thee compass'd with thy kingdom's pearl,  
That speak my salutation in their minds;  
Whose voices I desire aloud with mine:  
Hail, King of Scotland!

ALL. Hail, King of Scotland! [*Flourish*]

MALCOLM. We shall not spend a large expense of time

61 Before we reckon with your several loves,  
And make us even with you. My thanes and kinsmen,  
Henceforth be earls, the first that ever Scotland  
In such an honour nam'd. What 's more to do,  
65 Which would be planted newly with the time,  
As calling home our exil'd friends abroad  
That fled the snares of watchful tyranny;  
Producing forth the cruel ministers  
Of this dead butcher and his fiend-like queen,  
70 Who, as 't is thought, by self and violent hands  
Took off her life; this, and what needful else  
That calls upon us, by the grace of Grace,  
We will perform in measure, time, and place:  
So, thanks to all at once and to each one,  
75 Whom we invite to see us crown'd at Scone.

*Lady Macbeth  
con. address  
reunited*

[*Flourish. Exeunt*]











